



May 2022 Issue

MCGIRT V. OKLAHOMA

THE US SUPREME COURT DECISION IN 2020
REAFFIRMED THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE FIVE TRIBES.

"The Choctaw Nation remains confident in our legal position regarding our reservation, our sovereignty and our ability to provide effective law enforcement and judicial services, as we have done since McGirt was decided in 2020. Regardless of whether the Supreme Court decides to take up any challenges, we are committed to working cooperatively with other governments to protect and support our Tribal citizens and our fellow Oklahomans."

– Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation.

Protecting Tribal Citizens and Oklahoma Through Expanded Criminal Justice
Since 2020, the Choctaw Tribal Courts have filed over **2500** felony and misdemeanor cases.



More Judicial Officers:

Choctaw Nation recently appointed full-time Judge Amy J. Pierce, in addition to our two existing part-time Judges, on the Tribal District Court, raising the **District Court Judges to three.**



Established Public Defender's Office:

CNO established the Choctaw Nation Public Defender's Office and hired a **Public Defender Director** and three full-time public defenders.



Expanded Tribal Prosecutor's Office:

CNO added **six** assistant tribal prosecutors to assist Tribal Prosecutor Kara Bacon.



Cross Deputization Agreements:

Choctaw Tribal Police currently have **75** cross-deputization agreements with other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.



Tribal Police:

CNO has **added 38** public safety officers for a total of **80** on the Tribal Police Force.



The Supreme Court has declined to **hear more than 30 cases** filed by the State of Oklahoma seeking to overturn McGirt.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

The Choctaw Nation continues to progress and succeed in a post-McGirt world

By Kendra Germany-Wall

April 1 marked the first anniversary of the Sizemore decision, which applied the US Supreme Court's McGirt Ruling (2020) to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) and affirmed the sovereignty of the Five Tribes. As a result, CNO has worked to honor its responsibilities through various endeavors.

The McGirt ruling determined that Congress never disestablished the Muscogee (Creek) reservation when Oklahoma became a state in 1907 and that Jimcy McGirt, a felon convicted by the state, should have been prosecuted in federal court, not state court.

This argument is based on the 1885 Major Crimes Act, a federal law dictating that major crimes involving Native Americans in Indian Country be prosecuted in federal or tribal court.

Title 18 Section 1153 of the United States Code, known as the Major Crimes Act, grants tribes and the federal government exclusive jurisdiction to prosecute certain enumerated offenses committed by Indians within Indian Country. It reads in relevant part as follows:

"Any Indian who commits against the person or property of another Indian or other person any of the following offenses, namely, murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, maiming, a felony under chapter 109A, incest, a felony assault under section 113, an assault against an individual who has not attained the age of 16 years, felony child abuse or neglect, arson, burglary, robbery, and a felony under section 661 of this title within the Indian country, shall be subject to the same law and penalties as all other persons committing any of the above offenses, within the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States."

The federal General Crime Act gives the government criminal jurisdiction over non-Native Americans who commit most crimes against Native American victims. The federal government also shares jurisdiction with tribal courts to prosecute Native Americans committing crimes against non-Native Americans.

The following information is an update of CNO's response to the rulings.

Immediately following the ruling, CNO announced that it was prepared to file more than 125 cases in the District Court of the Choctaw Nation. In an historic move, CNO filed all 125 cases the same day to prevent any criminals from being released from custody.

In anticipation of the change in jurisdiction, the Choctaw Nation Tribal Prosecutor's Office met with all District

Attorney Offices within the Choctaw Nation's reservation boundaries.

Since 2020, the Choctaw Tribal Courts have filed over 2,500 felony and misdemeanor cases.

The Choctaw Nation's Tribal Prosecutor's Office now includes six full-time Assistant Tribal Prosecutor positions and four legal clerks. These prosecutors will work to make state and federal agencies aware of criminal convictions and current protective orders issued by the Choctaw Nation District Court.

In preparation for the influx of cases, the court system invested in new case management software that interfaces with the Tribal Prosecutor's Office and streamlines the filing process of new criminal cases.

In addition to criminal case identification, the Tribal Prosecutor's Office has worked with the Department of Public Safety to provide virtual jurisdictional training to tribal, state and city law enforcement agencies on the impact of the McGirt decision. This training assists authorities with the identification and verification of appropriate jurisdiction for the cases being investigated.

The Choctaw Nation Court website, www.choctawnationcourt.com, includes information on e-filing, case records and contact information for the Choctaw Nation's Judicial Branch and Office of the Tribal Prosecutor.

CNO also established the Choctaw Nation Public Defender's Office and hired a Public Defender Director and three full-time public defenders.

On January 7, 2022, CNO appointed Amy J. Pierce as the first full-time district court judge for the Nation's Judicial Branch.

An enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation, Judge Pierce was most recently a partner at Hampton Barghols Pierce, PLLC in Oklahoma City. She also held positions at two other law firms in Oklahoma City. Judge Pierce earned her Juris Doctorate from Oklahoma State University after receiving her Bachelor of Science from Oklahoma State University. She also completed the Harvard Negotiation Institute program through Harvard Law School.

To date, the Supreme Court has declined to hear more than 30 cases filed by the State of Oklahoma seeking to overturn McGirt.

CNO has spent in excess of \$24.8 million on direct and indirect expenses responding to McGirt to meet new responsibilities and ensure public safety across the reservation for all Oklahomans post-McGirt.

Many of CNO's Tribal Codes have been updated to reflect a post-McGirt

world. The Choctaw Nation Fish, Game and Animals Code was updated to allow tribal members to hunt and fish on Choctaw lands with their tribal ID in response to Governor Stitt's decision not to renew the Hunting and Fishing compact.

To view all of CNO's tribal codes, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/government/judicial-branch/tribal-codes>.

Things are constantly changing, and the Nation's Judicial Branch is growing in response to the Supreme Court's decision. The graphic at the bottom of this page shows the most recent post-McGirt statistics within the Choctaw Nation.

To stay up-to-date on tribal issues, follow Choctaw Nation on all social media platforms and check out <https://www.ChoctawNation.com>.

Post-McGirt Statistics (as of March 30, 2022)

CNO Arrests

- April 2020 – March 2021 Arrests – 104
- April 2021 – February 2022 Adult Arrests – 207
- Juvenile Arrests (on scene) – 2

(Source: Captain Brant Henry, CNO Public Safety.)

Cases Filed

- Felony 2020 – 22
- 2021 – 622
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 155
- Misdemeanor 2020 – 39
- 2021 – 772
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 193
- Juvenile Delinquent 2020 – 0
- 2021 – 15
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 2
- Juvenile Deprived 2020 – 30
- 2021 – 43
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 7
- Traffic 2020 – 14
- 2021 – 803
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 269

(Source: Sandy Stroud, Court Administrator.)

Special Domestic Violence Jurisdiction

Note: This is a subset of the total felony and misdemeanor cases filed.

- 2020
- Tribal Domestic Violence Cases: 5
- VAWA Special Domestic Violence Jurisdiction: 1
- 2021
- Tribal Domestic Violence Cases: 245

- VAWA Special Domestic Violence Jurisdiction: 84

(Source: Kara Baron, Tribal Prosecutor.)

Civil Cases Filed

- General Civil 2020 – 20
- 2021 – 24
- 2022 – 4
- Adoption 2020 – 7
- 2021 – 16
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 4
- Paternity 2020 – 25
- 2021 – 36
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 6
- Divorce 2020 – 137
- 2021 – 177
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 38
- Guardianship 2020 – 69
- 2021 – 101
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 15
- Protective Orders 2020 – 37
- 2021 – 152
- 2022 (year-to-date) – 39

(Source: Sandy Stroud, Court Administrator.)

Cross Deputization Agreements

CNO currently has 75 active cross deputization agreements with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

(Source: R.D. Hendrix, CNO Public Safety.)

Post-McGirt Additional Staff Authorized by Department

Assistant Prosecutor – 7 (4 of 7 are BIA-funded)

- Probation Officers – 5
- Transport Officer – 4
- Bailiff – 2
- Public Defender – 1
- Assistant Public Defender – 3 (2 of 3 are BIA-funded)
- Judiciary Clerk – 1
- Judiciary Clerk (BIA-funded) – 1
- Court Deputy Clerk – 2
- Court Deputy Clerk (BIA-funded) – 2
- Court Reporter – 1
- Court Coordinator – 1
- Tribal Police Officers – 38
- Tribal Police Sergeants – 4
- Criminal Investigator Sergeant – 1
- Criminal Investigator Detective – 3
- Domestic Violence Investigator – 1
- Tribal Police Trainer – 1
- Tribal Police Analyst – 0
- Law Enforcement IT – 0
- ICW (various positions) – 37
- Legal Assistants – 4
- Witness Coordinator – 3 (2 of 3 are BIA-funded and 1 is grant-funded)
- Juvenile Services Social Workers – 7
- Special District Circuit Judge – 1
- Presiding District Judge – 1
- Warrant Clerk – 2
- File Clerk – 1
- Total Staff: 133**

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Reflecting on Easter

Halito,
I love this time of the year. The weather is beautiful, and it gives me a time to reflect on the importance of God and the Resurrection.

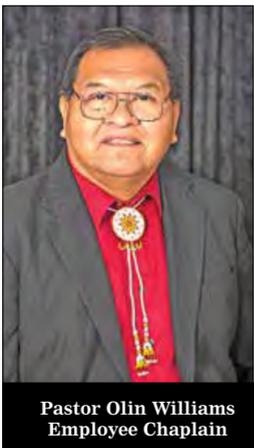
God loved us so much, that he sent his only begotten son to die for our sins. This was the ultimate example of sacrifice and love.

When I think about the Resurrection, it gives me hope and courage. I'm encouraged, and my faith is renewed because I know that no matter how bad or difficult the situation may appear to be, God's love will prevail, and He will bring me out of the situation.

It was wonderful to have our Easter Celebration in person this year. As we enjoyed the festivities,

we were mindful of the sacrifice and love that God has bestowed upon us and our great Choctaw Nation.

Yakohe and God bless!

Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Contend for the Faith

Jude 1:3 says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Jude is writing with a brokenness of spirit and a heart filled with devotion to his glorious Redeemer. He pleads with us to contend for the faith that was once delivered.

The faith, which is the body of Christian doctrine, does not change with the changing of times. It is not something that man has discovered or manufactured. It is the Spirit's revelation.

The historic faith is the truth that clusters around the Person and works of Jesus Christ.

The fundamentals of the faith are:

1. The verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.
2. The supernatural birth of Christ.
3. The sinless sovereign life of God manifested in the flesh.
4. Christ's substitutionary death on the cross.
5. Christ's physical resurrection from the dead and triumphant ascension to the Father.
6. The absolute necessity of the new birth by the Spirit.
7. The imminent return of the Lord to rapture His people home.

This is the faith we are to earnestly contend. The word contend means to agonize. It is the spirit of true agony which possesses one who is contending.

Agony of spirit and love for the Gospel should be in the heart of every believer. Contending means to fight while standing on the very thing being assaulted. It means to stand against all who undermine it.

We are living in a day of tolerance; a tolerance of false doctrines creeping their way into our churches today. Our churches are compromising with modernism in united efforts to increase church attendance, therefore undermining the historic faith of the early church.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Family Wellness Month

I hope you all have been enjoying spending time with your families!

We have reached the month of May, and this month marks Family Wellness Month. Family Wellness Month encourages healthy family lifestyles and habits and acknowledges the importance of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health in happy, functioning families.

The Choctaw Nation values family. In fact, it is one of the key components of the Chahta Spirit. A fitting example of the Nation's commitment to family wellness is our Chi Hullo Li Residential Treatment Center. The name Chi Hullo Li means "I love you" in the Choctaw Language.

The Chi Hullo Li Residential Treatment Center was built in 2001. The Center offers a 3-month residential substance abuse treatment program for Native American women and

their children. It provides a diverse experience that encompasses cultural and spiritual identity, physical and emotional health, education, and effective parenting.

"Chi Hullo Li views the path to recovery as a holistic approach," noted Krista Fincher, Chi Hullo Li Director. It is our cultural component that sets us apart and allows the women to reconnect with their Native identity."

Clients report that Chi Hullo Li is a life-changing experience. So, if you know of a woman and her children who may be in need of Chi Hullo Li's service, please call (888) 449-2905.

God bless.

Chief challenges employees to give blood during shortage



On April 7, Chief Batton challenged Choctaw Nation employees to donate blood due to the state of Oklahoma experiencing a critically low blood supply. The goal was to have at least 65 employees donate and 87 participated in the blood drive.



Interior Department releases action plan, outlines steps to advance equity

WASHINGTON (April 14, 2022) — The Department of the Interior today published its first Equity Action Plan, which outlines the Department's efforts to advance equity through all of its operations, remove barriers to equal opportunity, and deliver resources and benefits equitably to the general public. Secretary Deb Haaland will discuss the agency's plan at the White House Convening on Equity at 10 am ET, which will be livestreamed on the White House

YouTube channel.

The Department's equity plan focuses on three areas with the potential for high equity impact — contracts for businesses with characteristics that align with the definition of underserved communities; discretionary grants to better support Tribes in improving long-term sustainable development and quality of life for their members; and addressing barriers to recreation on Interior-managed lands and waters.

"The Biden-Harris administration is mobilizing an all-of-government approach to advance equity and justice across the federal government. As part of those efforts, the Department of the Interior is implementing an ambitious agenda to center justice, equity and inclusion in all our work," said Secretary Haaland. "We must continue to proactively ensure that historically underrepresented communities benefit from our efforts to address the climate crisis and make our nation's public lands and waters accessible and welcoming to everyone."

The Equity Action Plan is a key part of Interior's efforts to implement Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, which calls on federal agencies to advance equity by identifying and addressing barriers to equal opportunity that underserved communities may face as a result of some government policies and programs.

In February, Secretary Haaland established the first-ever Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Council to incorporate these practices into Interior's work across its many bureaus. The DEIA Council will coordinate across the agency to develop and implement policies, programs and initiatives. These will ensure that decision-making processes include input from employees at all levels and serve as a forum for collaboratively identifying and promoting best practices for integrating DEIA across the agency.

The plan builds on the Interior Department's progress toward delivering on equity and inclusion in the first year of the Biden-Harris administration. Over the last several months, the Department has taken steps to:

Invest resources from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in cleaning up legacy pollution, which disproportionately impacts underserved communities;

Strengthen Tribal communities with federal resources to address pressing issues;

Engage with stakeholders in low-income communities to ensure environmental justice benefits flow to these communities through the Administration's Justice40 initiative;

Embed equity in land and water conservation programs as well as the America the Beautiful initiative; and

Expand access to the National Park System for underserved communities and people with disabilities.

As part of those efforts, the Department has hosted over a dozen equity listening sessions attended by 1,700 diverse stakeholders across the country.

The Interior Department will continue to gather and consider feedback from internal and external stakeholders, collect and analyze relevant data and information, and review existing policies and processes to inform near-term actions and future equity action plans. Resources, including information on stakeholder engagement and listening sessions, will be available on the agency's equity website.

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Choctaw Nation Health Services

Office of Prosecution make ribbon skirts and shirts for Child Abuse Prevention Month

By Shelia Kirven

The Choctaw Nation's Office of Prosecution recently undertook a group project to make blue ribbon skirts and ribbon shirts for their staff for Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Gina South, Juvenile Division Chief and Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for the Office of the Tribal Prosecutor, said, "We did want to do something special for Child Abuse Prevention Month, and we are always trying to incorporate Indigenous culture, specifically Choctaw, whenever we can." One of the staff members had the idea and another suggested that the clothing be made from blue fabric, as that is the color associated with child abuse prevention.

The group watched a powerful YouTube video by Tala Tootoosis about ribbon skirts and their meaning.

Tootoosis' video expresses that ribbon skirts are like battle gear for Indigenous women and that they share a message. In her video, she says of the ribbon skirt, "It's about unity. It's about education. It's about empowerment." The video can be viewed at https://youtu.be/_qyWNvqdZVA.

South said a second video is also available on how to make the skirts and on gifting to younger women, making sure that you always pass on gifts to others. She said the video

speaks of it being a way to heal a community.

The eleven ladies of the department picked out their fabric and ribbons and they all worked on making their skirts. They also made a ribbon skirt for Judge Amy Pierce, wanting to be able to share a gift with her and ribbon shirts for the two gentlemen in the office.

"It was such a good bonding opportunity for our office," South said. "We've had several different opportunities during the month where we have been able to wear them, and we are really excited about being able to do that. We feel it is such a good way to incorporate Native elements of healing, and talking about unity within a community, and be able to talk about prevention of child abuse all at the same time."

South said that if you look back historically to the late 1800s, there are photos of Choctaw women wearing skirts with ribbons. However, it did not originate with the Choctaw tribe.

She also said that the Choctaw Nation Cultural Department previously did a beading project with the staff. "It was such a good way to bring together our prosecutors, our administrative support staff, our investigators, everyone was able to participate. It was something that brought together the entire office. It really built community in such a good way that was able to incorporate Native culture."



Photo By Christian Toews

April was Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Choctaw Nation's Office of Prosecution made ribbon skirts and shirts, wearing them throughout the month to promote the cause. Pictured front row: Deann Hawk, Kara Bacon, Randi Villars, Kelsey Long, Teola Maytubby, Gina South. Back Row: Mark Riffe, Spencer Harvey, Kari Hurst, Shana Doucet, Glenna Shepherd, Austin Browning, Jacob Keyes, Jonathan Hammond.

Cambrey Jo Hull named Miss United States Agriculture 2021

By Chris Jennings

In June 2021, Cambrey Jo Hull of Roland, Oklahoma, was crowned Miss United States Agriculture in Orlando, Florida. Since then, she has traveled over 35,000 miles and raised over \$500,000 while promoting her platform, Planting Seeds of Success with Disabled and At-Risk Children.

Hull chose this platform because of struggles she faced growing up, including a speech impediment and audio processing disorder where she couldn't hear vowel sounds.

Despite her struggles, Hull has never used them as setbacks but as learning opportunities.

"We're not going to let the past define what our future holds for us. We're going to continue to move forward, even though we may not think that we can do it. I want to create that support system for young individuals to not give up or lose sight of the end goal," she said.

Hull says she faced lots of discouragement.

"Growing up, I was told, 'You're never going to be successful; you're never going to be able to speak; and you're never going to have anything where you feel like you're valued,'" she said.

One of the things Hull credits for helping her the most is Future Farmers of America. Hull says she felt a boost of confidence the moment she zipped up her blue corduroy jacket. She followed through with that confidence, winning her first speech contest.

"I sat there, and I thought, to all those people who told me I couldn't, I just proved to them, and I proved myself, that I was fully capable," said Hull.

Hull is passionate about teaching agriculture to everybody. She says you don't have to have land or a big yard to participate. "It's not always just the cows and the plows and the sows. Each person can have a successful story within the agriculture industry," Hull said.

Demonstrating this, she's taught kids how to grow plants without soil using aquaculture. She's also taught floriculture and how to make flower arrangements.

"When you see a little girl sit there and make a beautiful bouquet and the smile that comes across her face, that's so rewarding knowing that they found something that interests them that they're able to do," said Hull.

Hull is the sixth generation of a farming and ranching family. She breeds and raises



Photo Provided

Cambrey Jo Hull, Miss United States Agriculture, teaches a group of children how to plant seeds.



Photo Provided

Cambrey Jo Hull is Miss United States Agriculture 2021. She has traveled over 35,000 miles promoting Oklahoma Agriculture.

grand champion heritage and fancy poultry breeds and award-winning waterfowl. Hull competes in career development events and is on a variety of Roland, Oklahoma FFA teams, including prepared public speaking, nursery and landscape, horticulture, livestock judging and land judging.

She is currently a senior at Roland High School, where she is active in the National Honor Society and is the FFA President. She plans to attend Oklahoma State University and pursue a degree in Agriculture Communications with a double minor in Agriculture Leadership and Marketing.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CONGRATULATIONS

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is proud to announce the upcoming graduation of family medicine physicians

Dustin Davis, D.O.
James Stull, D.O.
Eric Gillette, D.O.

After successfully completing three years of residency training, these physicians will be eligible for board certification in family medicine on June 30, 2022.

Choctaw Nation Family Medicine Residency Program

CNO Community Partner Fund awards quarterly contributions to strengthen and develop local communities

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund gives quarterly contributions quarterly to cities and counties that host non-gaming businesses throughout the Nation's territories. The expectation is for each local government to apply the Choctaw Community Partner Fund contribution toward supporting and developing the communities that serve tribal and non-tribal citizens.

District 5 – The Choctaw Nation awarded the city of Stigler \$11,300 and Haskell County \$6,400 from the Choctaw Community Partner Fund to continue to help strengthen and develop the local area.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund has been an ongoing effort for the last three years and The Choctaw Nation has contributed a combined total of \$170,650 to the city of Stigler and Haskell County.

District 10 – The Choctaw Nation awarded the city of Atoka \$35,900, Stringtown \$15,400 and Atoka County

\$24,700 from the Choctaw Community Partner Fund to continue to help strengthen and develop the local area.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund has been an ongoing effort for the last three years and The Choctaw Nation has contributed a for a combined total of \$863,450 to the cities of Atoka, Stringtown and Atoka County.

District 12 – The Choctaw Nation awarded the city of Coalgate \$7,000 and Coal County \$4,700 from the Choctaw Community Partner Fund to continue to help strengthen and develop the local area.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund has been an ongoing effort for the last three years and The Choctaw Nation has contributed a combined total of \$86,900 to the city of Coalgate and Coal County.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund began in 2019 and has put back more than \$5 million into southeastern Oklahoma communities.



Jennifer Woods

District 6

Halito! We are excited to see the signs of spring all over District 6. Spring represents new life and new beginnings, and we are so excited to see all the new things that are happening in District 6. We have a lot of activities that are going on once again and we all couldn't be happier. The seniors of District 6 are once again getting to come to the Community Center for lunch on Wednesday and are all very excited to get to visit with their fellow seniors. We have our monthly Community Bingo and Potluck on the second Tuesday of the month, a monthly Prayer gathering and breakfast on the first Friday of the month, and the seniors are playing chair volleyball and getting to take trips to events as well as the casinos. This week we had our Easter dinner and had a great time eating, fellowshiping, giving door prizes, hunting Easter eggs and the Easter Bunny even visited us. We are so excited to see our seniors happy and active once again.

We held our first quarterly check presentation for Latimer County for 2022 on March 23rd. The funds for this come through the Choctaw Nation Community Partnership Development Fund Program. We were able to donate \$17,900 to the County and \$14,200 to the City of Wilburton, which helps with the upkeep and maintenance of roads and other infrastructures.

We were very proud to be named the Business of the Month by the Wilburton Main Street and Chamber of Commerce for the month of April. It was a great honor from our community.

I had the honor of awarding District 6 Choctaw Veteran Leonard Draper the Veteran of the Month award at our monthly Tribal Council Meeting in Tuskahoma. Leonard served in the U.S. Marines during Vietnam and was a recipient of the Purple Heart Award for injuries he incurred while serving there. He had several members of the local VFW post 3469 and tribal members from District 6 who were there to celebrate with him as he received the award. Leonard is a beloved tribal member and is well known in our community and among the staff at the Community Center. Yakoke Leonard, for your service!

We are pleased to announce that we are adding two new Tribal Police Officers to the District 6 Police Force. Effective April 25th, Tribal Police Officers Trevor Vasquez and Zach Chavez joined the team. We are also pleased to announce the promotion of Jeremie Green to the position of Sargent. Thank you to all seven of our officers for protecting and serving our communities.

In February, we celebrated our ribbon cutting of 10 more new Independent Elder Homes and 10 more Affordable Rental homes. The families who were the recipients of the homes were excited to be able to move into their beautiful new energy-efficient brick homes. We are proud to be offering beautiful homes in a safe community setting.

Lastly, I would like to say Yakoke (Thank You) to all our staff and volunteers for their dedication to their work and our tribal members. Your assistance in every event or lunch provided to our members makes all that we do a success. You are all greatly appreciated.



Photo Provided

Choctaw Veteran Leonard Draper was recently honored as the Veteran of the Month. Local VFW post 3469 and tribal members from District 6 were there to celebrate with him as he received the award.



Amanda Welch Haskell County Representative; Shawna Hudspeth, Haskell County Representative; Ron Perry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 5 and Clark McClary, Haskell County Commissioner.



Cheryl Monks, Stigler City Clerk; Ron Perry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 5 and Becky Bumpers, City of Stigler Representative.



Anthony Dillard, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 10; Brian Cathey, Mayor of Atoka; Carol Ervin, Atoka City Industrial Authority and Diane McGee, Vice-Mayor of Atoka.



Brock Jones, Coal County Commissioner District 1 and James Frazier, Choctaw Nation Council Member District 12.



Anthony Dillard, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 10; Susie Moore, Stringtown City Clerk and Rick Boston, Mayor of Stringtown.



Anthony Dillard, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 10 and Shane Tomlinson, Atoka County Commissioner District 3.



James Frazier, Choctaw Nation Council Member District 12 and Johnny Jump, Coalgate City Manager.

Photos by Choctaw Nation

Choctaw Nation hosts esports invitational

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation hosted the second annual esports invitational on April 1 and 2, 2022. This esports tournament has helped facilitate the growth of this emerging sporting event.

"It's a great opportunity for them to get a better idea or understanding of what esports could look like here in Oklahoma as we move forward," said William Bray, esports director and IT director for Atoka Public Schools. 16 schools across Oklahoma, including Durant, Tushka and Atoka, brought teams to participate in a competition playing Overwatch and Super Smash Bros.

The collegiate teams from Oklahoma State University and Oklahoma University joined

the tournament on April 2. "There's obviously a large group of kids that look to gaming as their outlet, their source, it's their connection to other people," said Bray.

Chief Gary Batton of the Choctaw Nation said he was excited about the event and its potential opportunities.

"We love to be able to bring these kids here and not only are they able to play wonderful games but we have 16 different institutions here that can potentially offer them scholarships so they can go to college and that's awesome. He also commented on the potential for these athletes to end up in the IT field. "We would love to see them come back and work for us once they graduate from college or go to a VoTech and receive a certification," he said.



Joel Lewis plays Overwatch 2 during the tournament.



Chevell Gilliland concentrates on the game.

Photos by Christian Toew

Left: Chief Batton enters the esports arena on April 1. Above: Competitors get in the zone during the second annual esports invitational.

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY



MAY 27, 2022 | 10:00 AM

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Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

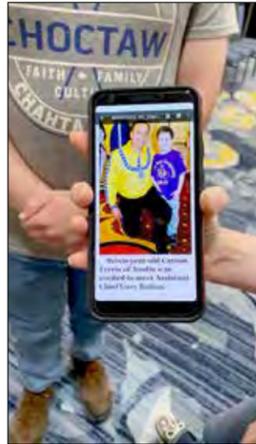
May 6	Crowder	By Appointment
May 10	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
May 10	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
May 11	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1 p.m.
May 13	Atoka	8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
May 13	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
May 17	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
May 18	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
May 24	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
May 25	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
May 25	Stigler	By Appointment
May 27	Atoka	8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
May 27	Coalgate	1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
May 31	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment

Community Meetings



Top: Carson Ferris and his family pose for a photo during the Choctaw Community Meeting in Austin. Right: Carson shows off a photo of him and Chief Batton at the 2013 meeting.



Photos by Trameika Vaxter
Top: The Ferris family poses for a photo with Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. and Chief Gary Batton during the Allen Choctaw Community Meeting. Right: Jade Cossey, Miss Choctaw Nation, talks to a young tribal member during the Allen Choctaw Community Meeting.



UPDATE YOUR CHOCTAW NATION MAILING SUBSCRIPTION

At Choctaw Nation, we constantly try to improve our services and look for better ways to serve you, our Tribal Member.

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- Biskinik
- Birthdays Card
- Calendar
- Christmas Ornament
- Member Letter

NOTE: Please update your subscription and allow time for changes to be effective. You will continue to receive your items during this process. Subscribers must be Choctaw Members 18+ years of age and older, or the only member in the household.



choctawnation.com/biskinik-subscription

CHOCTAW NATION CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
800-522-6170

Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above.

Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.

News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows.

We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published.

All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.

Mail to: Biskinik
P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702

or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

The Official
Monthly Publication
of the

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
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Kristina Humenesky, Senior Director
Kellie Matherly, Content Development Director
Kendra Wall, Content Development Manager
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P.O. Box 1210
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The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be typewritten and double-spaced. You must include an address and phone number where you may be reached. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Items are printed in the order received. Faxed photos will not be accepted.

If you are receiving more than one BISKINIK or your address needs to be changed, our Circulation Department would appreciate hearing from you at ext. 4028.

The BISKINIK is a nonprofit publication of the Choctaw Nation. Circulation is monthly. Deadline for articles and photographs to be submitted is the first day of each month to run in the following month.

Editor's note: Views and opinions in reader-submitted articles are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Choctaw Nation.

EVENTS

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Cultural Services Traditional Archery Shoot

May 14, 2022, at the Tvshka Homma Capitol Grounds

Sign-up: 9 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Event Begins: 9:30 a.m.

Lunch: 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

We will continue to shoot until all who are signed up have had their chance. Traditional southeastern-style self-bows will be provided. Open to all ages. No experience is necessary to shoot. We will teach all who are new to archery how to shoot. Sandwich Lunches will be provided. **Hand-made Bows ONLY.**

For more information, email rossg@choctawnation.com.

Oklahoma Tribal Alliance Indian Taco Sale

Saturday, May 14, 2022, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the American Legion Post 73/VFW Post 9969, located at 5000 SE 24th St, Del City, OK 73115.

Indian tacos will be sold for \$10.00 (show your OCTA membership card for \$1.00 off). Bottled water and soda will be \$1.00 each—complimentary tea and cookies. Craft vendor spots are available for \$25.00. Contact OCTAtreasurer2232@gmail.com for further information.



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Choctaw Nation Adult Education

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA April 9, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session March 12, 2022
 - b. Special Session March 28, 2022
 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #7 – David Davis
 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Faith Parra, Individual Speaker—For the Love of the (Choctaw) Language
 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve the Application for the Family Violence Prevention Grant for FY2023. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill Passed cb-111-22
 - b. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill Passed cb-112-22
 - c. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill Passed cb-113-22
 - d. Approve the Purchase of Real Property Located at 2917 Big Lots Drive, Durant, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill Passed cb-114-22
 - e. Approve the Purchase of Real Property Located at 818 Dallas Street, Talihina, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill Passed cb-115-22
 - f. Resolution Supporting Chief Gary Batton to Serve on the U.S. Department of Interior Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Resolution Passed cr-01-22
 9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 10. OLD BUSINESS
 11. ADJOURNMENT
 12. CLOSING PRAYER
- Councilman Frazier was not present

EXPLORE YOUR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TODAY!

Project Iti (Tree)

Choctaw Nation & General Motors are teaming up to identify job candidates for Information Technology (IT) related positions.

Project Iti is committed to empowering Choctaw Veterans and females who are interested in a meaningful career in the IT field.

For More Information:

- Contact Bryan Martin at 918-429-3134 or bmartin@choctawnation.com or Rebecca Hawkins at 580-916-0420 or rhawkins@choctawnation.com
- Complete the Career Development application at <https://cdapplication.choctawnation.com>
- Place "Project Iti" on step 2 of 9 in the Career Goal/Certification Seeking Box.
- A+ Certification is a plus.

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Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

The Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association offers small business, home, home improvement and agriculture loans. The Choctaw Revolving Loan Program offers micro-loans, available for emergency home improvements and small businesses.

For more information, please contact Susan Edwards at (580) 924-8280 ext. 2161, ext. 2158 or toll-free (800) 522-6170.

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association Loan
To Be Eligible to Apply:

- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from a federally recognized tribe

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund
To Be Eligible to Apply:

- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from the Choctaw Nation

If you are interested in applying for a loan a representative will be available at the:

Idabel Community Center
May 27, 2022
9:00 – 11:00

Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna May Language Lesson

Common Questions

Katohmi? - - - How many....How much?

Nittak katohmi ish tuksvla chi?	How many days will you work?
Vlla katohmi hosh chi maya?	How many children do you have?
Yvmmvt iyvli katohmi?	How much is that?
Chi kaa hvt iyvli katohmi hq ish atobbi tuk?	How much did you pay for your car?
Katohmi chim ahwa?	How much or how many do you think it is?
Iskvli katohmi hq ish ikbi tuk?	How much money did you make?
Chahta anumpa katohmi ish ikhana?	How many Choctaw words do you know?
Takkon katohmi ish vpa tuk?	How many apples did you eat?
Sandwiches katohmi ish vpa chi?	How many sandwiches will you eat?
Issi katohmi ish pisa tuk?	How many deer did you see?
Isht tiwa katohmi ish ishi?	How many keys do you have?
Isht holissochi katohmi ish chompa chi?	How many pen/pencils will you buy?
Holisso katohmi ish hocheha chi?	How many books will you read?
Na hvlbina katohmi ish habena tuk?	How many gifts did you receive?
Oksak katohmi ish aiowa tuk?	How many hickory nuts did you pick up?
Hvpi katohmi ish ibani tuk?	How much salt did you add/put in?
Tanchi nihi katohmi ish hokcha chi?	How much corn will you plant?
Iskvli katohmi hq ish ishi?	How much money do you have?

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Wayne Irving Queen

Wayne Irving Queen, 96, passed away Nov. 29, 2021.

Wayne was born Sept. 27, 1925, in Loving, Okla., to Andrew Vanderbelt (Vander) and Pearl Kirksey Queen.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Ruth Alice Stader; daughter Nancy; brothers Vester, Clifford, and Jimmie Queen; and sister Emma Ruth Queen Carnes.

Wayne is survived by his grandson Tony Blassingame; great-grandchildren Jessica, Holly, Patricia, and Zeth Blassingame; eight great-grandchildren; brother Don Queen; sister Janazean Queen Daggs; and numerous nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

**Doris Leona Lewis**

Doris Leona (Sumner) Lewis, 88, passed away Jan. 22, 2022.

Doris was born May 15, 1933, in Hughes County, Okla., to Grover and Iva Sumner.

She was preceded in death by her husband Wilburn Lewis; and brothers Rex Sumner and C.B. Sumner.

Doris is survived by daughters Sandra Griffin and spouse Bert, and Brenda Pryor; grandchildren and spouses Laura and Nathan Wicker, Ben and Charly Pryor, and Danny and Natasha Pryor; four great-grandchildren and spouses Daegan and Tyler Peliti, Isaac Stover, and Lennon and Ari Pryor; four great-grandchildren Leighton, Grayson, Jaxson, and Shiloh Peliti; brothers and spouses Ernest and Sallie Sumner, and Claude and Maggie Sumner; sisters Loui Livingston, and Twilla Thornton and spouse Jim.

For the full obituary, please visit [Fisher Funeral Home](#).

**Nora Lee Scott**

Nora Lee (Ramsey) Scott, 75, passed away Feb. 3, 2022.

Nora was born April 19, 1946, in Talihina, Okla., to Ellis and Lorene (Harris) Ramsey.

She was preceded in death by her parents; half-sister Lillian Sullivan; half-brother Leroy Sealey Sr.; sisters Marion Winlock and Eliza Scott; brother Ellis Franklin Ramsey; baby brother David; and grandsons Leslie Wayne Scott, Quinton Picone, and Isham Alexander Scott.

Nora is survived by her husband Wayne Russell Scott Sr.; her children Wayne Scott Jr., Sonya Christie and spouse Vincent, Kimberly Scott, Jeremy Scott and spouse Honnibear; adopted son Melvin Palmer; grandchildren Joshua Ellis, Jeffery Ellis, Julie Ellis, Justin Ellis, Carmen Christie, Jamie Scott, Tonihka Scott, Judy Picone, Andi Picone, Alisha Picone, Leigha Scott, and Olivia Scott; 26 great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and other family members.

For the full obituary, please visit [Jones-Harkins Funeral Home](#).

**Nettie Webb**

Nettie Webb, 71, passed away March 3, 2022.

Nettie was born May 11, 1950, in Battiest, Okla., to George and Hester Battiest.

She was preceded in death by her parents; son Delbert Sampson; daughters Jacqueline Sanchez and Audra Harris; brothers Sam Battiest and Vernon Battiest; and sisters Sue Battiest and Bernice Yanez.

Nettie is survived by daughters Rebecca Cheshire and spouse Greg, and Esterlyn Meashintubby; sons Robert Sampson and George Pell; special friends Jimmy Webb and Will Watkins; brothers Rick Battiest and Wayne Battiest; sisters Mattie Battiest and Ruthie Fleming; 10 grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews and a host of other relatives and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral Home](#).

**John Dale Fowler**

John Dale Fowler, 79, passed away Feb. 16, 2022.

John was born Nov. 1, 1942, to Sims and Mary Fowler.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Bob and Gene Fowler; and sister Sue Avants.

John is survived by his wife Carol Anderson; daughters Erin Klawiter and spouse Trey, Alexis Hyyppa and spouse Eric, and Austin Bell and spouse Mike; grandchildren Palmer Klawiter, Wyatt Klawiter, and Sam Klawiter, Annika Hyyppa, Lillian Wattier, John-Michael Bell, Dean Bell, and Rosa Bell; brother Frank Fowler; sister Linda Folger; Carol's children and grandchildren Justin Anderson and spouse Amy, Julie Flory and spouse Brian, Lane Anderson, Tate Anderson, Cole Flory and Piper Flory.

For the full obituary, please visit [Rumsey-Yost Funeral Home](#).

**Harold Raymond Smith Sr.**

Harold Raymond Smith Sr., 95, passed away May 31, 2021.

Harold was born Dec. 5, 1925, near Foreman, Ark., to Pierce and Virgie Smith.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Opal and Gladys; and brothers Jim and Clarence.

Harold is survived by his wife Elsie; children Linda White and spouse Sid, Ray Smith Jr. and spouse Sheila, and Roger Smith and spouse Coleen; five grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren; and seven great-great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Sutton Memorial Funeral Home](#).

**Susan Kay Sturdivant**

Susan Kay Sturdivant, 72, passed away Feb. 25, 2022.

Susan was born Jan. 17, 1950, in Pomona, Calif., to William F. and Mamie Bell (Airington) Smith.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and husband Billy.

Susan is survived by her son Gilbert Sturdivant and spouse Lisa; daughters Kelly Scifres and spouse Butch, and Keri Self and spouse Clifford; grandchildren Keith Sturdivant and spouse Micaela, Kaylynn Self, Tommy Self, and Clifford Self Jr.; as well as a host of other family and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Alexander Funeral Home](#).

**Norman Eugene Going**

Norman Eugene Going, 73, passed away Jan. 24, 2022.

Norman was born Nov. 17, 1948, in Talihina, Okla., to McClayborn and Annie (Williams) Going.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Marvin Going; and sisters Ida Mae Wilson and Florence Goodblanket.

Norman is survived by his sons Lance Goings, Brian Goings and spouse NanJu, and Jon Goings and spouse Cristal; daughters Collette Phillips and spouse Darryl Samuels, and Andrea Goings; grandchildren Ashley Rodriguez, Cera Phillips, Gavin Goings, Kayla Goings and spouse Alberto Alonso, Misty Goings, Andrew "Drew" Goings, Scott Scammerhorn, Joseph "Joey" Scammerhorn, Sean Goings, Katie Goings, Sarah Spicer, Zachary Goings, Alexander Lewis and partner Judy King, DaMario Lewis, and Alysia Lewis; great-grandchildren Mathew Going, Gabriella "Gabby" Rodriguez, and Ezra Lewis; sisters Rachel Sullivan and spouse Ken, Nora Jane Sakiestewa, and Naomi Going.

For the full obituary, please visit [Beasley Wood Funeral Home](#).

**Ronald Bacon**

Ronald "Poppy" Bacon, 67, passed away March 17, 2022.

Ronald was born Oct. 10, 1954, in Talihina, Okla., to Norma (Fisher) Bacon and Everett Bacon.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Christine; sons Farron Belone and Mark Glenn; and brother Robert Bacon.

Ronald is survived by his sons Allen Bacon and spouse Angie Lynn, David Bacon and spouse Cassandra, and Vladamiur Belone; daughter Shelly Morgan and spouse Cliff; sister Rebecca Sexton; grandchildren Joseph Bacon, Shaelena Bacon, Noe Alvarado, Kaydance Bacon, Talina Bacon, Jessica Terry, Kaylee Kerlin, Emma Terry, Windy Bacon, Clayton Morgan, Craig Morgan, Shaylee Morgan, Norman Glenn, and Ethan Glenn; numerous great-grandchildren; other relatives, loved ones, and many friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Evans Miller Funeral Home](#).

**Truman Kenieutubbe**

Truman Kenieutubbe, 38, passed away March 3, 2022.

Truman was born May 14, 1983, in McAlester, Okla., to Osborne "Bones" Kenieutubbe and Martha (Hampton) Kenieutubbe.

He was preceded in death by his parents; infant brother; brother Thurman Kenieutubbe; paternal grandparents Anna Kenieutubbe and Osborne Kenieutubbe Sr.; maternal grandmother Gladys Hampton; aunts Wanda Byington, Oleta Kenieutubbe, and Janie Bear; and uncle Johnny Boy Kenieutubbe.

Truman is survived by siblings Teresa Kenieutubbe, Travis Kenieutubbe, and Taylor Kenieutubbe; niece and nephews Anna, Austin, and Ethan; special cousins Amari Smith and Crystal Hampton; aunts Regina Kenieutubbe and Phyllis Williams; dear friend Hannah Cook; and other family members and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Chaney Harkins Funeral Home](#).

**Verna Mae Mills Peters**

Verna Mae Mills Peters, 91, passed away March 19, 2022.

Verna was born June 19, 1930, in Bennington, Okla., to Minerva and Arlo Pamplin.

She was preceded in death by two sisters; four brothers; her husbands Marvin Mills and Paul Peters; daughter Evelyn Kaye Mills Cook; sons Richard "Ricky" Mills, David Mills, and Herbert Mills; grandson Jeremy; great-grandson Mikey; and great-great-grandson Dawson.

Verna is survived by her sons Marvin Mills and spouse Tammy, and Melvin Mills; daughter Lorri Boyd and spouse Keith; sisters Eleanor Bully Palmer, Louella Fobb Olinger, and Bernice Fobb Williams; 17 grandchildren; 42 great-grandchildren; and 22 great-great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Minton Chatwell Funeral Home](#).

**Joan Robertson**

Joan (Bean) Robertson, 91, passed away March 9, 2022.

Joan was born Sept. 13, 1930, in Boswell, Okla., to Bettie and Hubert Bean.

She was preceded in death by her daughter Adryan Bunch.

Joan is survived by her children Terri Goldwasser, Dainna Bunch, Lisa Bunch, and Darrel Bunch.

For the full obituary, please visit [Cristo Rey Funeral Home](#).

**Debra Kay McClelland**

Debra Kay McClelland, 62, passed away Feb. 20, 2022.

Debbie was born Oct. 12, 1959, to Brenda Kay Folsom and Roy Paul Nowlin.

She was preceded in death by her father and stepfather.

Debbie is survived by her son Alan D. Rhys; her mother; sister Lisa Sharp; brother Roy Paul Nowlin; grandchildren Dillyn Rhys, Gaven Rhys, and Rhiannon Rhys; great-grandson Grayson Rhys; nieces Tiffany Glander and Misty Gassman; nephew Thomas Sharp; and a host of great-nieces and nephews, cousins, and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Gordon Funeral Home](#).

**Russell N. Ward**

Russell N. Ward, 79, passed away Aug. 5, 2021.

Russell was born July 28, 1942, in Wewoka, Okla., to Zelia Mae Burns and Joseph Lightfoot Ward.

He is survived by his wife Sally; son Rio Ward and spouse Lisa; daughter Lori Ward and significant other Michael McCoy; dear family friend Randy Wallace and his family; grandchildren Jessica (Josh), Rachel (Jeremy), and Matthew (Samantha); brothers-in-law Ed Mendez and spouse, and Mark Barbosa and family; great-grandchild Ainsley; nieces Gina Ward and family, Jennifer Sanders and family, and Amy Ward; nephew Joel Ward; sisters Labelle and family, and Lafonda and family; brother Warren Dean and family; best man Johnny Swinney; dear friend and neighbor Patches Morgan; many General Motors friends, and many, many close friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Sky Vue Funeral Home](#).

**Carroll Vinson Lovell Jr.**

Carroll Vinson Lovell Jr., 66, passed away March 5, 2022.

Carroll was born Oct. 17, 1955, to Peggy Jean and Carroll Vinson Lovell Sr.

He was preceded in death by his father; and sister Marcelle Pitchinson.

Carroll is survived by his mother Peggy Jean Lovell (Casey); siblings Latrelle Mouton (Dennis), Rebecca Varisco (Greg), Joel Lovell (Bridget), and Richard Lovell (Kendra); and many cherished nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Matthews and Son Funeral Home](#).

**Christina Marie James**

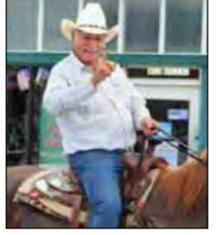
Christina Marie (Phillips) James, 80, passed away March 10, 2022.

Christina was born July 16, 1941, in Unger, Okla., to Custer Phillips and Alma (Jacob) Phillips.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Roger Phillips and Anthony Phillips; and sisters Leona Vaughn, Marchalen Lawson, and Janet Phillips.

Christina is survived by her sons Michael James and spouse Christal, and Stephen James and spouse Dreama; daughters Rose Neal and spouse Greg, Diane Hyland, and Tammie Chadrick and spouse David; 12 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; along with numerous other relatives and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home](#).



Vivian Ann Williams



Vivian Ann Williams, 62, passed away Nov. 27, 2021. Vivian was born Oct. 5, 1959, in Talihina, Okla., to Abbie and Verna Williams Battiest. She was preceded in death by her parents; mother-in-law and father-in-law Frances and Hampton Williams; brothers-in-law Hamp Jr. Williams, Marcus Williams, and Donell Williams; and sisters-in-law Viola Battiest, Lucille Williams, and Bonnie Feathers. Vivian is survived by her husband Tim; son Trent Williams; stepson Bradley Hardy and spouse Loretta; brothers Allen Battiest and spouse Noe, and Earl Battiest and spouse Dana; sister Velma Battiest; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law Lydia and Mike McClure, Rose and Jim Shemwell, Loretta and Ivan Battiest, and Rita Anna; other relatives and many friends. For the full obituary, please visit [White Funeral Home](#).

Doris G. Ross



Doris G. Ross, 79, passed away March 18, 2022. Doris was born Oct. 25, 1942, in Talihina, Okla., to James John and Prim Lewis. She was preceded in death by her parents; stepfather Ramsey Lewis; sister "Lou" Louis Parks; brothers Eugene John, Dean John, and Simeon Hicks; daughter Tina Marie Parker; and granddaughter Gale Marie Young. Doris is survived by her son Les Williston and fiancé Elizabeth Knapp; daughter Tonia Williston; and brothers Buck John and Vernon John; 14 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Prater-Lamp-ton-Mills & Coffey Funeral Home](#).

Johnathan Tyler Gay



Johnathan Tyler Gay, 29, passed away Feb. 22, 2022. Tyler was born July 8, 1992, in Sierra Vista, Ariz., to James G. and Kelli Renee' (Anderson) Gay. He was preceded in death by his grandparents Gary and Joan (Rossi) Gay, and John H. and Katie (Walkup) Anderson; and uncle John E. Anderson. Tyler is survived by his parents; uncles Scott Gay and spouse Janet, and Don Anderson and spouse Lisa; and many cousins and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

Roy Edward Gammon



Roy Edward Gammon, 56, passed away March 20, 2022. Roy was born June 23, 1965, in Purcell, Okla., to Roy and Minnie Louise (Combest) Gammon. He was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents Easter Gammon and Lewis Gammon; and maternal grandmother Nina Combest. Roy is survived by his mother Minnie Louise Gammon; daughters Ashly Schomer and Brittany Gammon; sister Sharon Caldwell and spouse Velton; grandson Saxon Schomer; along with other relatives and dear friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Brown Funeral Home](#).

Tracy L. Grom



Tracy L. Grom, 62, passed away Sept. 21, 2021. Tracy was born April 22, 1959, in Janesville, Wisc., to Harry and Dorothy (Carns) Hamel. She was preceded in death by her father. Tracy is survived by her mother; brothers Don Hamel, Mike Hamel, and Charlie Hamel; sister Cammy Hamel; daughter Tanya McDonough (Dan, Tyler, and Dalila); sons Tobi Ingoglia (Haley, Jayden, and TJ), Victor Raymond and Zak Raymond (Lilly, Kaz, and Nonah); and nephew Justin Carberry (Kevin and Alayna). For the full obituary, please visit [Ritchay Funeral Home](#).

Johanna Elizabeth Womack



Johanna Elizabeth Womack, 45, passed away March 22, 2022. Johanna was born March 15, 1977, in Ft. Smith, Ark., to John Edward and Sharan Marie (Rogers) Womack. She was preceded in death by her father. Johanna is survived by her sons TyKota Womack, Hunter Taylor, and Ryder Williams; her mother; sisters Lisa Brewster, Twyla Eckelhoff, and Holly Hodel; brothers Mark Anderson and Scott Womack; and numerous other family members and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Mallory-Martin Funeral Home](#).

Johnnie Mae Lowell



Johnnie Mae Lowell, 78, passed away Jan. 31, 2022. Johnnie was born Oct. 1, 1943, in Bakersfield, Calif., to John Gibson and Betty Jean Morris. She was preceded in death by her grandmother Clara Mae Landers; her parents; and son Mark Dixon Evans. Johnnie is survived by her husband Monty; children Craig Davis, Lenora "Norie" Mae Rodriguez, and John Yancy Evans; grandchildren Raymond, Morgan, Jacob, Taylor, Garrett, and Sarah; great-grandchildren Braden, Zoe, Alexa, Olivia, Abilene, and John Austin; and siblings Donna, Betty Jo, and Sheryl. For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

Benny Frank Frazier



Benny Frank Frazier, 76, passed away Jan. 10, 2022. Benny was born Sept. 10, 1945, in Talihina, Okla., to Cornelius Arthur and Roseanna (Brandy) Frazier. He was preceded in death by his grandson Xzander Bell; brothers Steven, Eli, Jimmy and David Frazier; and sisters Madaline Jessie, Fannie LaSarge, Mary McClure, and Anna Stephan. Benny is survived by his children Vince Ortiz, Yolanda, and Jeffrey Bell; grandchildren Ariana Ortiz, Christian Bell, Jarrett Jayroe, and Javian Bell; and brother James "Chun" Frazier. For the full obituary, please visit [White Family Funeral Home](#).

John L. Morrison



John L. Morrison, 62, passed away March 23, 2022. John was born Jan. 7, 1960, in Apple Valley, Calif., to Ward and Norma (Wyer) Morrison. He was preceded in death by his brother Robert Morrison. John is survived by his wife Jeanette; daughters Meagan Cook, Melissa Morrison, and Katie Eckenrode; son Justin Morrison; grandchildren Damien Weatherwalk, Wyatt Weatherwalk, Max Weatherwalk, Piper Weatherwalk, Gypsy Eckenrode, and Parker Cook; sisters Patricia Mechura, Mary Cohea, Donna Caldwell, and Gloria Smith; brother Joe Morrison; and many nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Sorge Funeral Home](#).

Florence Chavis



Florence (Nowabbi) Chavis, 99, passed away March 30, 2022. Florence was born Dec. 14, 1922, in Hugo, Okla., to Alfred Nowabbi and Nellie Locke. She was preceded in death by her husband Joe Chavis; son David Chavis; and her parents. Florence is survived by her children Ella Martin and Joe Dean Chavis; grandchildren Tammy Price, Danetta Smith, Leslie Kirkpatrick, Cheryl Jones, Amy Kolb, and Cody Chavis; great-grandchildren Chad Franklin, David Price, Brendan Haliburton, Michael Smith, Michaela Smith, Zane Smith, Cameron Jones, Abby Hiner, Bella Kolb, JT Wood, Robbie Bland, Dakota Daniels, and Kadin Kirkpatrick; great-great-grandchildren Penelope Bland and Tingleigh Bland; as well as numerous relatives and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Serenity Funeral Service](#).

Ann Spence Parker



Ann Spence Parker, 78, passed away April 1, 2022. Ann was born April 25, 1943, in Los Angeles, Calif., to James Elmer and Juanita Spence. She was preceded in death by her husband Frank Parker; her parents; stepfather Hardy Price; grandparents Charles and Agnes Middleton, and James and Mary Spence; and brothers Richard, Jerrel, JC, and Joe Spence. Ann is survived by her daughters Anita Parker, and Juanita Lawson and spouse Terry; grandson Joshua Lawson and spouse Shayla; grandsons Josiah Lawson and Stephen Lawson; great-grandson Beckett Lawson; sister Carolyn Boatner and spouse Steve; sisters-in-law Judy Spence, Faye Spence, and Ruth Maynard; and numerous nephews and nieces. For the full obituary, please visit [Matthews Funeral Home](#).

Dave Vanriette



Dave Vanriette, 95, passed away Jan. 27, 2022. Dave was born June 22, 1926, in Albion, Okla., to Mamie (Bryant) and Alexander Vanriette. He was preceded in death by his wife Ola; his parents; two sisters; a brother; and daughters Julie Vanriette Rose, Thelma Vanriette Johnson, Melinda Vanriette Houser, and Carol Sue Vanriette. Dave is survived by his children Robert Vanriette and spouse Louise, Toniva Vanriette, David Vanriette, Sherry Shankle, and Myria Morris; 14 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren; 11 great-great-grandchildren; as well as numerous extended family and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [McCarn Funeral Home](#).

Jason Ryan WhiteEagle



Jason Ryan WhiteEagle, 44, passed away March 17, 2022. Jason was born Oct. 22, 1977, in Talihina, Okla., to Lois Marie (Ward) and Adam WhiteEagle. He is survived by his mother; brothers Floyd WhiteEagle, Matthew WhiteEagle, and Adam WhiteEagle Jr.; children Emma McCurtain and Kristopher WhiteEagle; as well as numerous cousins, aunts, uncles, and extended family. For the full obituary, please visit [McCarn Funeral Service](#).

William Dean Bennett



William "Bill" Dean Bennett, 54, passed away Feb. 19, 2022. Bill was born Feb. 9, 1968, in Oroville, Calif. to Marion Bennett and Bonnie Mae (Sears) Helm. He was preceded in death by his mother. Bill is survived by his son Jacob Bennett; father and stepmother Marion and Jolene Bennett; brothers Brian Bennett, Tim Bennett, Dana Bennett, and David Bennett; nieces and nephews Ashley, Dustin, Garth, Ty, Shawn, Gracie, Christian (Amanda), Elizabeth, and Jenna (Taylor); as well as numerous other family. For the full obituary, please visit [Dignity Memorial](#).

Bayou MacArthur Dewayne Burge



Bayou MacArthur Dewayne Burge, 43, passed away April 9, 2022. Bayou was born Oct. 22, 1978, in Stigler, Okla., to Kenneth and Sue (Davis) Burge. He was preceded in death by his father; and grandparents C.E. and Coke Burge, and George and Martha Davis. Bayou is survived by his mother; son Kaleb Burge; siblings Brian Burge and spouse Aleisha, and Rian Burge and spouse Tracy; nephews Christian Burge and spouse Rachel, Conner Burge and spouse Beka, Cade Burge, Tyler Burge, Dawson Burge, and Blaine Burge; and great-nephews and great-nieces Liam, Olivia, Cody, and Charlotte. For the full obituary, please visit [Mallory-Martin Funeral Home](#).

Kent Aurthur Bacon



Kent Aurthur Bacon, 59, passed away April 9, 2022. Kent was born May 14, 1962, in Hugo, Okla., to David Bacon and Clovis (Dill) Bacon. He was preceded in death by his parents. Kent is survived by his brothers Davy Bacon and spouse Lisa, Ernie Bacon and spouse Rindy, Keith Bacon and spouse Connie, Doyle Bacon and spouse Wendy, Mike Bacon and Holly, Kevin Bacon, and Barry Dill and spouse Kristy; sisters Lisa Ann Hall and spouse David, and Lana McDowell and spouse Bert; along with numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller & Miller Funeral Home](#).

Darrell Douglas Sorrells Jr.



Darrell Douglas Sorrells Jr., 60, passed away Feb. 27, 2022. Darrell was born Oct. 24, 1961, in Harbor City, Calif., to Linda (Bons) and Darrell Sorrells Sr. He is survived by his wife Susan; children Doug Sorrells and spouse Cathy, Dwane Sorrells and spouse Amy, Clinton Sorrells and spouse Laci, Dakota Sorrells and spouse Loren, Brittany Campbell and spouse Hayden, and Cheyenne Sorrells; his mother; sister Laurie Boren and spouse Keith; 15 grandchildren; nephew Bill Reed and spouse Shannon; niece Kristen Dunn and spouse Kelly; as well as numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, and a host of friends. For the full obituary, please visit [McCarn Funeral Home](#).

Anson Paul Williams



Anson Paul Williams, 38, passed away Jan. 14, 2022. Anson was born Feb. 3, 1983, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Carter Williams and Joyce Ann (Thomas) Williams. He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Richard Vann Williams. Anson is survived by his uncle Bobby Gene Thomas; aunt Luella Thomas; aunt Liza Thomas; and numerous cousins. For the full obituary, please visit [Griffin-Hillcrest Funeral Home](#).

Kathleen Sue Hitchcock



Kathleen Sue (Adams) Hitchcock, 79, passed away March 27, 2022. Kathleen was born Jan. 17, 1943, in Wilson, Okla., to Edmond and Alice (Dumas) Adams. She was preceded in death by her husband Doug; son Michael; and grandson Dominic. Kathleen is survived by her children Cindy Hoover and spouse Mark, Mark Hitchcock, Kathleen Brackney and spouse Matt, Doug Hitchcock III and spouse Nadia, and Becky Schoppenhorst and spouse Glenn; grandchildren Robert, Elizabeth, Curtis Jr., Micky, Nicholas, Mark, Kaila, Rebecca, Sarah, Ryan, Mary, Brianna, Maria, and Glen Jr.; great-grandchildren Sophia, Taber, Harper, Tucker, Trey, Ruby Mae, Blake, Cole, Charlie, Oliver, Bennett, Ellie, Mason, Adilyn, and Everly; sister Debbie Rodgers; and best friend Patty Grafrath. For the full obituary, please visit [Martin Funeral Home](#).

Obituary Policy

Obituary submissions are for Choctaw Nation tribal members only and are free of charge. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes. Family members/individuals may submit funeral notices as long as the notice is from the funeral home or printed in their local newspaper through a funeral home service. Full-length handwritten notices will not be accepted. The Biskinik strives to serve all Choctaws. Therefore, any handwritten notices received will be searched online for official funeral home notices. If none are found, efforts will be made to contact the family and make arrangements for an official notice. Due to space limitations, there is a 150 word limit for obituaries. The online issue of the Biskinik will contain links to the full obituaries. Send official obituary notices to: Biskinik, PO Box 1210, Durant OK 74702, or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Hollyn Wren Helton



Lindsay, Tim and sister Heidi Helton welcomed a baby girl, Hollyn Wren Helton, on January 19, 2022, in The Woodlands, Texas.

Hollyn is a great-great-granddaughter of Pearl Paxton Brogdon, an original enrollee and Madison Brogdon.

Lindsay is the daughter of Chris and Debbie Wells of Stillwater, Oklahoma, and her siblings are Patrick Wells, Cody Wells and Jamie Glasson. Other maternal family members are Carolyn (Diggs) and Ruhah Wells Enid, Oklahoma, and Virginia (Brogdon) and Cary Diggs Enid, Oklahoma.

Rubio finalist for POE award



Thirty-six educators, support professionals and administrators, along with two schools, will be honored as finalists for the Excellence in Education Merit and Character Awards by the Professional Oklahoma Educators Foundation in Oklahoma City.

The Excellence in Education Awards Banquet recognizes and rewards Oklahoma educators who demonstrate a commitment to their students in teaching strength of character and excellence in the school or classroom. Award nominees must go through a rigorous application and evaluation process.

According to POE Foundation Executive Director Ginger Tinney, "These awards serve as an encouragement to not only Oklahoma educators, but also to the many businesses, organizations, and communities that have a stake in the character building and intellectual development of the children who will shape our state in the future."

Rebecca Rubio of Bennington Public Schools won the High School Educator Merit award. A math and algebra teacher, Rubio believes students will perform better for people who they feel believe in them. She has devoted her life to helping children not only in math and algebra but also with positive attitudes and an open outlook on the world. Rubio is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

"She is always prepared for class and really keeps the students engaged," said Rich Grimes, principal of Bennington High School. "She uses different styles of teaching so that all of her students have the optimal chance of learning the material."

As a Merit Award winner, Rubio received a check for \$500, a free POE membership and a commendation from Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell.

Brown named Business Person of The Year



The largest online referral network for small businesses, Alignable.com is announcing the results of its national search for leaders who've gone above and beyond guiding peers and supporting entire communities as they strive to recover.

Alignable's network has chosen Beth Brown of Shine Social Co. as Edmond, Oklahoma's 2022 Business Person Of The Year for the second year in a row!

"In our business community, you end up receiving more than you give," said Brown. "And the challenges we've all encountered have compelled many of us to offer counsel and other support to peers struggling to keep their businesses afloat. While I'm thrilled to receive this award, it's really a testament to this entire community. And it reinforces my resolve to help all of my business 'Oklahomies' to build and rock their business so that we're all fulfilling our purposes."

Brown received a special badge on her Alignable profile, recognizing this big win. In past years, the awareness generated through similar contests has spurred expanded connections, as well as new business for many winners.

"At Shine Social Co., we love to help business owners who want to show up better on social media but a) lack the time to do it consistently, or b) don't really know how to do it effectively. Many of the businesses we help allow us to fully manage their social media, from writing content to creating graphics, so they don't have to give it a second thought. Others just need social media 101 guidance. That's when we help guide & teach them to create a monthly strategy & plan for posting on their own. Visit us at www.shinesocialco.com to see how we can help you shineUP, shineOUT, & shineON. Follow us on your favorite social media platform @shinesocialco."



Archibald turns 90

Imogene Archibald of Mexia, Texas, would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for the beautiful afghan celebrating her 90th birthday in March. She is a loved mother of three, grandmother of seven, and great-grandmother of 15.

Covels celebrate 50 years



On May 14, 2022, Ronnie and Theresa Covell will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

They were married on Mother's Day in 1972. In Sugar City, Colorado.

Stetson Wayne Sims



Stetson Wayne Sims was born on February 28, 2022. He weighed 9 pounds, 4 ounces and was 20 inches long.

He is the son of Taylor and Alex Sims and the grandson of Andy and Barbara Sims and the great grandson of Thomas David Page. Welcome to the world little one.

Malachi Jimmye Dennis Maple



Malachi Jimmye Dennis Maple was born in Coral Springs, Florida, on March 14, 2022, at 6:56 a.m., at 8 lbs 2 oz and 21 inches long to the proud parents of Christopher and Leah Maple.

Prescot goes to State



Landen Francis Junior at Prescott High School. Landen placed third in the Arizona State Championship on March 17, 2022.

Davis named April Veteran of the Month

David Davis of District 7 is the Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month. Davis was born in Talihina, Oklahoma, on June 9, 1948, and graduated from high school in Wright City. He attended Eastern Okla. State College and graduated with an associate degree in drafting in 1968.

Davis continued his education at Central State University in Edmond and was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1969. He attended recruit training in Ft. Polk, Louisiana, and then microwave training in Ft. Monmouth, N.J. He was promoted to Specialist 4 and went to Vietnam to serve at the Battalion Headquarters where he spent one year.

While in Vietnam, Spec. Davis was awarded the Meritorious Service Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, an Army Commendation, Good Conduct Medal, SPS M-16, and the Vietnam Service Medal.

Upon return from Vietnam, Spec. Davis was honorably discharged and began working at Weyerhaeuser Sawmill. He retired after 40 years.

Davis has been married to Annie for 52 years, and they have two sons, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He has won eight state horseshoe pitching championships, four state double horseshoe pitching championships, and three world horseshoe pitching championships. The Choctaw Nation recognized Davis with a sign on Hwy. 98 coming into Wright City for his World Championship Horseshoe pitching.

Davis served as Mayor of Wright City for five years and has been a deacon in his church since 2013.

The Choctaw Nation holds our Veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates the sacrifices and contributions they have made to preserve our freedoms and the way of life we hold dear.



Ardis honored as "Hometown Hero"

Sumter County Sheriff's Office Lt. James Ardis was recently honored by the United States Air Force Thunderbirds as a Hometown Hero. Ardis was able to fly in an F-16 with the Thunderbirds before the Shaw Air and Space Expo in South Carolina.

Ardis was nominated for his bravery and dedication in serving the Sumter community for more than 13 years at the Sumter County Sheriff's Office. He was named Deputy of the Year in 2018 and two Deputy of the Month awards. In total, he has served more than 17 years in law enforcement.

Recently, he played a key role in de-escalating an armed domestic violence call. He and his deputies convinced the suspect to drop their weapon and surrender. Their actions prevented any harm and ultimately led to the suspect's apprehension.

Ardis flew with Thunderbird No. 8, Maj. Jacob Impelizzeri, the advanced pilot and narrator for the U.S. Air Force Demonstration Squadron.

Ardis' friends and family were in attendance and witnessed their hometown hero get the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Ardis never imagined he'd be selected as a hometown hero, let alone be the candidate to fly.

"I couldn't have done it without my team," said Ardis. "I was just doing my job... They're why I do what I do. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here today, and I wouldn't have a great career like I do. It's because of those guys and my family."

Burns recognized for community impact

Tribal member Aubony Burns was recently announced as an awardee for the Adeline Garcia Community Service Awards.

This is an annual fundraiser hosted by Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB) to honor leaders whose service has had a significant impact on urban Native well-being in the Seattle area. This event is also a time when the community comes together to invest in Native health. All proceeds from the event will support expansion projects that will help SIHB bring culturally attuned healthcare to Indigenous people throughout the region.

Aubony is a Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney at the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) and an enrolled citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She is a trial attorney currently assigned to the Most Dangerous Offender Project (MDOP), a specialized homicide unit. Aubony began her career at the KCPAO in 2013 after a career in law enforcement in New Mexico. She has prosecuted a wide variety of crimes, including murders, rapes, child abuse and assaults. She has spent



her career advocating for victims of violence with a focus on gender-based violence.

Aubony has provided trainings, CLEs, and educational presentations to law enforcement, law schools, attorneys, judges, and community members in Washington, New Mexico, and Oregon. She is the current legislative appointed representative from the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys on the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force (MMIWP).

Aubony is dedicated to helping forge strong relationships between government agencies, service and resource providers, and community members to enhance the safety and visibility of Native women and children.

Leuschen receives top award



BeKa Leuschen recently received the National Science Foundation - Graduate Student Fellowship (NSF-GRFP).

The NSF-GRFP recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students in NSF-supported STEM disciplines pursuing research-based master's and doctoral degrees at accredited U.S. institutions. Leuschen is a Ph.D. student at Purdue University.

"The Choctaw Nation, Higher Education Program, and Cultural Services Department have been instrumental in my pursuit of my Ph.D. in Molecular Plant Pathology at Purdue University. I wanted to take a moment to personally share this great news with you, as securing a future for Indigenous STEM research is one of my greatest motivations," said Leuschen.

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ITI FABVSSA

A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1940-1950

Iti Fabvssa is currently running a series that covers the span of Oklahoma Choctaw history. By examining each decade since the Choctaw government arrived in our new homelands using Choctaw-created documents, we better understand Choctaw ancestors' experiences and how they made decisions that have led us into the present. This month covers the 1940-1950 period when Choctaws worked with U.S. Congressmen to address issues regarding land restrictions and sell their coal and asphalt lands.

Throughout the 1900s, Chief William Durant (in office 1937-1948) and Chief Harry J. W. Belvin (in office 1948-1971) worked with Oklahoma's U.S. congressional delegation on numerous issues facing the Choctaw people.

Since statehood, the Choctaw chief was in constant contact with their congressional representative.

Given the Choctaws' nation-to-nation relationship with the United States, the Oklahoma congress members who represented District 3, where Choctaw treaty territory was located, were an important ally to the Choctaw people.

Often the congressional representative served as an intermediary between the federal government (especially the Bureau of Indian Affairs) and the Choctaw Nation.

Throughout much of the 1900s, Oklahoma was home to the largest Native population in the United States.

Given this, Native people were important to local politicians hoping to get elected as local representatives. Congressional District 3 covered the southeastern corner of Oklahoma where Choctaws and Chickasaw people held their allotments and lived. This made them a significant voter base.

As a result, aspiring politicians and local representatives worked with the Choctaw and Chickasaw chiefs as much as they could to secure their votes during election season.

Numerous members of Congress were critical allies to Choctaws throughout the 20th century.

One particularly significant congressman was a Choctaw named William G. Stigler.

In 1944, Stigler was elected to U.S. Congress as the Oklahoma representative for District 2. This area included northeastern Oklahoma, part of Cherokee and Creek treaty territory.

As someone involved in Choctaw affairs throughout his life, he worked with Native leaders – Choctaw leaders in particular – to make



Chief William A. Durant (middle) during a meal at the Council House, date unknown. Image courtesy of the Gateway to Oklahoma History; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

sure the Native people's needs were recognized and addressed by the federal government. Stigler remained in office until he died in 1952.

Elmer Thomas, who served in the U.S. Senate, was also an important ally who championed welfare legislation advocated for by Choctaws.

After his election as the U.S. congressional representative for Oklahoma's District 3 in 1949, Carl Albert would become another critical ally in U.S. Congress to the Choctaw people.

Given the close relationship that members of Congress had with Choctaw leaders, individual Choctaw citizens wrote letters directly to them to request help with issues they faced regarding their lands or issues with the state. These congressmen often redirected their letters to the correct office that could help them, or those congressmen would reach out to other government officials on the individuals' behalf.

For instance, many Choctaws wrote to congressional representatives like Stigler about how they needed the per capita payments from the sale of the coal and asphalt lands to help them pay their bills, as well as how they needed to extend the period of restrictions on their lands to prevent them from losing them.

Other individuals also called for removing restrictions so they would no longer have to go to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for permission to manage their lands how they wanted.

In response, Congressman Stigler worked with Chief William Durant

and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to develop legislation to address Choctaws' needs and desires regarding land restrictions.

In response to many of the issues that Choctaws had regarding land restrictions, Congressman Stigler pushed for an act that would create a uniform set of regulations for the Five Tribes.

Since the Five Tribes' lands were governed differently due to their unique treaties, the laws governing allotment for the Five Tribes were slightly different, as mentioned in previous Iti Fabvssa articles.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs managed land restrictions that exempted allotments from taxation and that made the Five Tribes' allotments particularly unique.

Choctaws responded in diverse ways to these restrictions, which were initially planned to be only temporary. When the restrictions were set to expire in 1928, many full-blood Choctaws asked for the period of land restrictions to be extended, while Choctaws with lower blood quantum (calculated through the Dawes Rolls) often advocated for the removal of restrictions.

Of course, it was not always the case that a full-blood would want to keep land restrictions, and those with less blood quantum would not since it varied case by case. But the Bureau of Indian Affairs nevertheless received a lot of requests (and was often unable to keep up with the volume of requests), and this was the general trend that they found.

To address Choctaws' varied demands regarding land restrictions and to ease the caseloads of the BIA, U.S. Congress passed an act that stated that removed the restrictions on land allotments for Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Muscogee Creeks and Seminoles with less than 50% blood quantum in 1947.

Decades later, Choctaws would deal with the unintended consequences of this act.

In 2018, Choctaw Nation worked with local members of Congress to amend the 1947 act to remove the blood quantum requirement.

Another major issue that Choctaws worked with Oklahoma Congress members on was the sale of the coal and asphalt lands.

In 1938, Choctaws and Chickasaws jointly owned 376,757 acres of coal deposits and 3,040 acres of asphalt lands. The coal lands encompassed the areas that are now Atoka, Coal, Pittsburg, Latimer, Le Flore and Haskell counties, while the asphalt lands were all located in Pushmataha, Murray and Carter counties.

After the U.S. government appraised the lands, they calculated them to be worth \$10,041,030. In 1918, 1919, 1920 and 1925, the U.S. government offered these lands for sale at the appraised value but could only sell smaller parcels.

The inability to sell the remaining 376,757 acres frustrated Choctaws, who were unable to receive per capita payments that would have come from the sale of those lands. As a result, the Choctaw Advisory Council passed a resolution requesting that the U.S. government purchase the remaining coal and asphalt lands.

In 1949, the Bureau of Indian Affairs finally sold the coal and asphalt lands they had been trying to sell since Oklahoma statehood.

The next challenge for Choctaw and Chickasaw leaders was the distribution of payments of citizens listed on the Dawes Rolls and the increasing push for Choctaw Termination, which we will cover next month for the 1950-1960 period.

Additional reading resources on this period are available on the Choctaw Nation Cultural Service webpage <https://choctawnationculture.com/choctaw-culture/additional-resources.aspx>.

Follow along with this Iti Fabvssa series in print and online at <https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>.

If you have questions or want more information on the sources, please contact Megan Baker at meganb@choctawnation.com.

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Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation, Home Finance Department, is committed to helping find the right mortgage product for Choctaw tribal members. We understand that every borrower is different, and a variety of products are offered to meet individual requirements. We make the process of securing a mortgage loan simple and straightforward.

Choctaw tribal members living within the Choctaw Nation Reservation can apply for purchase, refinance, and construction loans. These loans are a fixed market interest rate for up to 30 years.

Down payment assistance loans are offered to Choctaw tribal members nationwide. Borrowers must apply with Choctaw Home Finance and be referred to a participating lender for any loans out of the state of Oklahoma.

Streamline home improvement loans are offered to Choctaw tribal members throughout Oklahoma. The streamline loan is up to \$15,000 and allows for home repairs and small home improvement projects. Appraisal and inspections may be required.

Credit repair loans are offered to Choctaw tribal members in the Choctaw Nation Reservation. This loan is up to \$10,000 and is subject to budget/credit counseling requirements.

Loan qualification is based on income and credit history. Let our knowledgeable staff assist you. Call us at 1-800-235-3087 or visit our website for more information <http://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/housing/home-finance>.

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College Freshman Year Initiative

Change a life, become a foster parent

By Chris Jennings

There are children across the country who don't know if they're going to get a meal; they don't know if they'll be able to bathe; some don't even know where their parents are.

When situations get this dire, many of these children are placed into foster care. Foster care is when a child is taken into protective custody because their home environment is not safe, whether from neglect, abuse or unsafe living conditions.

There are currently over 450 Choctaw children in either state or tribal custody who need foster homes. According to Foster Care Recruiter for the Choctaw Nation, Julie McElyea, nearly 250 are within the Choctaw reservation boundaries. The number Choctaw foster homes has gone up slightly to 69 recently, but that's not enough. "We're nowhere near where we need to be to house all those children," said McElyea.

McElyea says that initially, they try to place kids with a kinship. Kinship is someone who has an existing relationship with them. "Preferably family; if not, it can be somebody like a teacher, preacher, aunt, uncle, grandparent or just somebody that has a relationship with that child," said McElyea.

If a kinship can't be found, they start to look for traditional foster homes. There are several types of foster homes. Traditional homes will provide care for extended periods. Emergency homes offer short-term housing for up to a week until family or a traditional foster home can be found. Respite homes offer breaks for other foster families when the need arises.

The Tur family has fostered 25 Native kids, usually aged 6 to 12. Kayla Tur said that initially, her husband had some worries about fostering. "He was worried that he wasn't going to be able to love other kids like he could his [own] kids, and he was concerned that they would be able to tell the difference," she said.

After the first one, they both agreed they needed to keep fostering. It wasn't until a couple of years later, after fostering several kids through the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, that the Turs began to work with the Choctaw Nation foster program.

Tur saw a post on the Foster Care and Adoptive Association of Oklahoma Facebook group about an 11-year-old Choctaw boy who needed therapeutic foster care. Therapeutic foster care is required when the child has additional mental or physical needs, which the

Turs had not had training in, so she scrolled past. After seeing the post several more times, she took it as a sign and requested more information.

The boy had been placed in 14 homes, with many placements not lasting more than a week. Tur made a commitment that changed this boy's life, saying, "I will guarantee you 30 days; if he's extremely hard, I will at least give 30 days."

During the first 30 days, Tur relied heavily on her village for support. Still, she says it was hard, "It was very, very hard. I was in the bathroom crying a lot...but we made it 30 days, and I was like, okay, well, if I can make it 30, I can make it 60," said Tur.

It's been three years since that first 30 days, and the Turs are on a solid plan with the boy's biological father for reunification.

This is a prime example of the Choctaw Nation foster program goal. "We take children and provide them with a safe and loving environment for them to thrive in. We also work with their families for reunification. Reunification is always the goal," McElyea said.

In many cases, parents who have lost their kids come from homes that may not have been a nurturing environment, so they may not know how to be good parents. "Some of our biological families that have lost custody of their kids may not know the appropriate way to change a diaper or know that what they did was wrong. So you have to have foster families willing to model appropriate behaviors for them. That helps them in the reunification process," said McElyea.

"Every time I have kids, I reach out to their family members," said Tur.

Keeping family ties is essential. It gives a sense of belonging and helps children identify with who they are, where they came from and their culture. "So much of their heritage has already been lost through the Trail of Tears and in boarding schools that it's important to keep them connected," McElyea said.

Culture can be a great source of strength and pride. It can be one of the things that helps a foster child keep their head up. The Nation offers assistance with cultural events and virtual classes on Choctaw culture.

"It's very important for us, for our foster families, to be able to share that culture with them...We host numerous trainings throughout the year, trying to teach them more about our culture," said McElyea.

The foster kids aren't the only ones learning from the fostering experience. Tur has four



Submitted Photo

Pictured are Wes, Casen, Bria, Zane, Kayla and Avery Tur. The Turs adopted Bria and Casen in 2018. The Turs have a good relationship with their biological family. In May, Kayla will be doing a joint Celebrate Recovery testimony with the children's biological mother.

kids, two biological and two adopted children, whom she says have learned from being part of a foster family. "They've grown in compassion, and I feel like they no longer are as judgmental of other people," said Tur.

The kids say that sometimes it's nice having other kids around to play with, but sometimes it's hard, too.

Avery Tur, 17, says sometimes it's hard not to seem appreciated. "When the kids don't realize how much we're helping them, and they don't appreciate it, but I know they're young and have been through a lot," she said.

McElyea says one of the biggest deterrents for people considering fostering kids is attachment, "Everybody says they would love to do it, but they don't want to get attached. And that's when you tell them that they need to get attached because those kids don't have anybody attached to them right now," she said.

Zane Tur, 15, says he misses the kids when they leave. "It feels empty and that something is missing. You wonder if they will get the same treatment when they leave," he said.

Avery Tur echoes that, saying, "A lot of times when kids leave, there is more silence than there was before, and it's hard knowing if we did enough to help them. You can't help but wonder if they will do just as well when they aren't in your home," she said.

When asked what he wanted to say to people considering opening their homes to foster kids, the Turs' Choctaw foster child said, "Fostering gives kids more friends, so you should do it."

Sometimes the best thing that can happen

for these foster kids is for someone to see them, to take them in and love them, to be their friend.

If you're interested in becoming a foster parent, there are some requirements before being approved.

- You or your spouse must be an enrolled member of any federally recognized tribe.
- You can be single or married.
- You must be at least 21 years of age.
- You must have the emotional, physical, and financial abilities to provide for a child's needs.
- You must submit to a search of all state and national criminal history records.
- You must ensure that no household member has a prior conviction of a sexual offense.
- You must attend pre-service training.
- You must ensure that no household member has a confirmed child welfare history.
- You must provide information for a family assessment (home study).

The approval process, including the necessary criminal background and child welfare checks, usually takes about 90-days but could take longer.

The Choctaw Nation is currently looking for all home types. They accept single individuals, married couples and domestic partnerships as foster parents. For the most current application or more information, go to www.choctawnation.com/fostercare.

The Hidden Dangers of the Meth Epidemic

By Caitlyn Bowman, OMS-4

Methamphetamine is one of the most abused substances in the U.S. According to the National Institute of Health, almost 1% of the U.S. population reported using meth in 2020. In 2022, that number is expected to grow even higher, with some of the highest rates of use being in Southeastern Oklahoma. The number of meth-associated hospitalizations and deaths is also increasing each year, but the origin of these tragedies may not be due to meth alone.

Meth is increasingly found to be laced with other substances, often without the user's knowledge. Forensic testing of meth intercepted by law enforcement has shown meth to be laced with opioids (like Fentanyl), ecstasy, benzodiazepines (like Xanax) and THC in very high concentrations. These drugs by themselves carry risks of seizures, stroke, heart attack, arrest of breathing, and psychosis, among others. Even more alarming is the fact that when these drugs are combined with meth, a synergistic effect occurs in which less of each drug is required to encounter these life-threatening side effects. Thus, users of laced meth are more likely to suffer these side effects, which often lead to hospitalization and death. Although some people who use meth feel confident that their dealer would never give them anything other than pure meth, the fact remains that about 90% of methamphetamine in the US is produced in southern California, the ingredients of which are supplied by Mexican cartels – meaning that there is not a verifiable way for the average local meth dealer to know the exact purity of the meth they are selling. Even the small portion of meth in the US produced by local meth labs may be laced with these substances.

The logic behind lacing meth with other substances is purely fiscal but at the price of human lives. Meth itself is not physiologically as addictive as other substances, such as opioids and benzodiazepines. Individuals who make meth use this to their advantage by lacing meth with these highly physiologically addictive substances. Sudden cessation of the use of benzodiazepines and opioids after prolonged and repeated use (such as when it is unknowingly used by someone who binges laced meth) causes intense withdrawals. To quiet these distressing withdrawal symptoms, meth users return to their dealer for more laced meth. Over a short amount of time, the individual will need increasing amounts of the substance to mitigate their withdrawal symptoms, which pads their dealer's pocketbook and increases the demand for their product. This

also drives the prices higher and increases profits garnered by the meth producers over time. Unfortunately, opioid and benzodiazepine overdoses frequently occur due to this method of covert drugging and contribute to the 28.5% yearly increase in opioid-related deaths in the US. This phenomenon has been dubbed "the twin epidemic" in reference to the opioid epidemic sweeping the U.S. in the past several years. In addition, individuals using meth laced with benzodiazepines are at high risk of death during withdrawal.

Other drugs laced with methamphetamines, such as ecstasy and THC, are used primarily to increase the euphoria during the high. This causes an individual to become "addicted" to the intense high that purer forms of meth will not provide, ensuring that the user will continue to source their meth from the dealer who supplied the laced product. Again, this ensures that the pocketbooks of the dealers and producers of meth will only grow larger, irrespective of whether using meth in combination with ecstasy and THC increases the individual's risk of heart attack, stroke, and psychosis.

The fact that using laced meth increases its addictive potential makes treatment and achieving remission more difficult. Results from studies have postulated that meth use can still have a negative effect on mood and psychotic symptoms for at least a year after becoming abstinent. The use of other psychotropic substances, even alcohol, while abstaining from meth can cause a continuation of depression, hallucinations and delusions due to the longstanding inflammation and damage in the brain that occurs from even one-time meth use. Although there are currently no FDA-approved medical treatment options for those addicted to meth, counseling and therapy have been shown to be effective. It may be difficult for those who abuse meth to institute these treatments willingly, but family members and friends of people suspected to abuse meth can be the biggest supporters of their loved one's road to remission. The most helpful – but probably the most difficult – action family members and friends can take is identifying and stopping enabling behaviors. Having open, non-accusatory conversations with the loved one can also help motivate future change over time. Family members and friends may also seek counseling themselves to help navigate the stressors and uncertainties that this problem brings.

This column was written by a guest contributor from the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority.

Sautéed Asparagus

- 2 tablespoons of oil
- 1 bunch of fresh asparagus
- 1 tablespoons of minced garlic (or 2 teaspoons of garlic powder)

Preparation

1. Melt the butter or margarine in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and asparagus spears; cover and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until asparagus is tender. If you like your asparagus well done, reduce heat and cook for an additional 10 minutes.



WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 580-298-3161	Every Tuesday	8:30am - 4:00pm
Atoka 580-889-5825	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tuesday of the Month	8:30am - 4:00pm
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Monday - Friday (except 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00am - 4:30pm
Durant 580-920-2100 ext 83852	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Heavener 918-974-1820	Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Hugo 580-326-9707	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Idabel 580-286-2600 ext 4113	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
McAlester 918-423-6335	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Poteau 918-647-4585	Mon, Wed & Friday Tuesday & Thursday	8am - 4:30pm 8:30am - 5pm
Smithville 580-244-3289	2nd Thursday of the Month	8:30am - 4:00pm
Spiro 918-962-3832	Thursday & Friday (3rd, 4th & 5th Wednesdays of the month)	8:00am - 4:30pm
Stigler 918-967-4211	Monday - Tuesday (the first two Wednesdays)	8:30am - 4:00pm
Talihina 918-567-7000 ext 6792	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Wilburton 580-642-7588	Monday and Wednesday	8:30am - 4:00pm
Mobile Van 580-380-5679	Dates & times vary due to weather & travel (Service in Boswell, Coalgate and Clayton)	

Choctaw Nation Health Services

SHOULD I BE SCREENED FOR LUNG CANCER?

The more you smoke, and the longer you smoke, the higher your risk is for lung cancer. You should consider being screened using a Low-Dose CT Scan if you have all three of these risk factors:

- 50 to 80 years old
- Current smoker or former smoker who quit less than 15 years ago
- A smoking history of at least 20 pack-years (this means one pack a day for 20 years or two packs a day for 10 years, etc.)

If you are in the high risk category, talk to your physician about whether screening is beneficial for you.

For more information:
Choctaw Nation Health Services
Low-Dose CT Program
(800) 349-7026 ext. 6545

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 Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

May 2022

All markets open weekdays, May 2-26
Closed: May 27, 30 & 31.
 Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
 Participants can request a calendar at their location.
ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443
Food demos May 11 & 23
BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Food demos May 3 & 12
DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Food demos May 4 & 17
MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716
Food demos May 5 & 18
POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431
Food demos May 10 & 19

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Adoption led to Choctaw girl's forever home with legendary King of the Cowboys and Queen of the West

By Shelia Kirven

One of the most famous Western songs of all time, *Happy Trails*, was released by Hollywood legends Roy Rogers and Dale Evans in 1952. It goes like this:

“Some trails are happy ones, others are blue. It’s the way you ride the trail that counts, here’s a happy one for you. Happy trails to you, until we meet again. Happy trails to you, keep smiling until then. Who cares about the clouds when we’re together? Just sing a song and bring the sunny weather. Happy trails to you, until we meet again.”

If you know anything about Rogers and Evans, you know that the song fits the couple perfectly and seems somewhat autobiographical. *Happy Trails* became the theme song for the couple’s 1940s and 1950s radio program, and their 1950s television show.

Rogers and Evans made many movies and recorded multiple albums. They appeared in several radio and television shows, including the *Roy Rogers Show* from 1951 to 1957.

Rogers was born Leonard Franklin Slye in Ohio on Nov. 5, 1911, the son of Mattie (Womack) and Andrew “Andy” Slye. He was one of the country’s most famous and legendary actors and singers. Growing up during the Great Depression, he ultimately moved from Ohio to California to find work. He played the guitar and joined

up with the musical group Sons of the Pioneers.

Rogers became a Hollywood name and starred alongside other legends such as Gene Autry and John Wayne. It has been said that Rogers was second only to Walt Disney in whose name and likeness were used in merchandising.

Rogers’ wife, Dale Evans Rogers, born Frances Octavia Smith on Oct. 31, 1912, was from Uvalde, Texas and raised in Texas and Arkansas. At an early age, she became a popular radio singer. She later moved to Chicago and was ultimately signed to star with Rogers as his leading lady.

The couple married on Dec. 31, 1947, in Davis, Oklahoma. Their marriage lasted more than 50 years until Rogers died in 1998. Evans passed away in 2001.

What you might not know is that Roy Rogers was Choctaw and that he and his wife Dale adopted a 7-month-old Choctaw daughter during their marriage. Mary Little Doe “Dodie” Rogers was born in March 1952, becoming the youngest child of the Hollywood legends.

“When I was adopted, Mom wanted to name me Mary Little Doe, and she did. They named me Mary Little Doe. But then gradually the Little Doe would be shortened to Doe and then Dodie. I’m not exactly sure if it was my dad or who actually started calling me Dodie first, but I believe it was him. It just stuck. I’ve gone by Dodie

ever since, even though it’s not legal, on legal paperwork, but everyone knows me as Dodie.”

Rogers and Evans had a total of nine children together. Rogers had two children, Linda Lou and Roy “Dusty” Jr., from a previous marriage, and he and his wife also adopted one child together, Cheryl. Evans had a son by a previous marriage, Tom Fox. Rogers and Evans had one biological child together, Robin, and they adopted three children, Debbie, John David “Sandy,” and Mary Little Doe “Dodie.” They also fostered a daughter, Marion “Mimi” from Scotland, whom they considered to be their adopted child as well.

Rogers and Evans were advocates for adoption and foster services.

Dodie said, “They had always loved children. Whenever they traveled or did shows, or just on their series and stuff, they were always caring about any children they saw.”

When asked what it meant being a Choctaw child waiting for adoption and knowing that she was chosen by one of the world’s most famous persons who happened to be Choctaw, Dodie said, “Very blessed. It’s just to me remarkable that everything turned out that way in that time. It’s beyond coincidental. It’s hard to say it was meant to be, but I believe it was something that God put there.”

Dodie said that her older sister Cheryl once became interested in learning about her own biological family and decided find out what she could at the orphanage in Dallas that Cheryl was adopted from. While Evans was there, that’s when she saw Dodie.

She had told Dodie later upon seeing her for the first time, that she wished she would go to a good home because she was taken with her. Upon Evans returning home, daughter Robin developed problems, one after another, and passed away not too long after.

Roy took Dale to Texas where her family was to spend some time after Robin’s death. While there, he decided to go to the orphanage again. Evans said she

really wasn’t ready, but that she would go.

Dodie said her father told her when he stopped the car, Evans couldn’t get out fast enough.

“When she did, the people were following her, and she went straight to where I was,” said Dodie.

Evans told Dodie she remembered her from the previous visit and was so anxious to see if she was still there.

The agency knew that Rogers was Choctaw, and it was their policy that one of the parents be of Native American heritage to adopt the Choctaw child. Ultimately after a home visit, the adoption was arranged and completed.

Years later Evans found Dodie’s biological family and surprised her. She was able to meet members of the family and got to know them. Her biological grandmother would come to visit and became good friends with Evans.

“Mom was very strong in being able to give me a touch of my heritage and background. She bought me books and she talked to Choctaw people.”

Dodie grew up in California. She appeared on one episode of the *Roy Rogers* series as a baby, and an episode of *This is Your Life*. The children traveled with their parents when they could, especially during the summer.

She said, “They would have us run on stage and they had a song for each of us. I have the little 45 that my mom wrote for me.”

Dodie said the children were raised in a Christian environment.

“When they would go on tour and around the country to state fairs, they would sing songs of faith, and their belief in God and family. They included that in whatever they did and whatever they talked and sang. That was always forefront of their lives,” Dodie said.

As an adult, Dodie worked at a hospital as a secretary/assistant and then went to paralegal school at the suggestion of her daughter.

“I’m an avid reader. I saw those beautiful books. I looked at each one of them, Legal Writing, Civil Law,



Photos Provided

Roy Rogers and Dale Evans with their daughter, Mary Little Doe “Dodie” Rogers.

Criminal Law, and I just can’t tell you what I felt, but I thought this is what I want,” said Dodie.

She went on to work at a worker’s compensation insurance company. She then got a job for the general council there, the legal department for the company.

Dodie now lives in Alabama with her husband, Jon Patterson, who is an engineer for NASA. They met in California around 1999. Jon moved to Alabama, and they would fly back and forth to see each other. She ultimately moved to Alabama to join him. She said it was hard to leave her family in California, but her daughter and family eventually joined them in Alabama.

Dodie has one daughter, Kristin, two stepchildren, Wes and Rosalynn, three grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. Patterson just received his 30-year pin from NASA and works on the space launch system.

Dodie is still close to her living siblings and tries to visit them whenever she can. Linda Lou recently moved to Tennessee. Dusty and his family live in Missouri. Tom’s daughter is starting to do festivals with Dodie, and she said that Cheryl still attends festivals occasionally.

“I never was prepared for how many fans there still was,” said Dodie.

She has books and photos of her parents that she takes to the festivals, and she signs autographs and visits with the fans.

“That was quite different for me to do because I’ve always been kind of quiet and shy. Being social was not my strong suit. But I’ve learned to be able to get out of my comfort zone. I’ve met a lot of great friends and people. I really look forward to it now. They’re fun. I like them,” Dodie said.

“Wherever they want any of us to talk if we can we try to do it.”

Roy Rogers and Dale Evans’ legacies still live on today and the family works to ensure that.

The Sons of the Pioneers are still together and tour regularly with Dusty now a permanent part of the group. You can visit their webpage at <https://sonsofthepioneers.org/>.

Cheryl Rogers Barnett has her own website at <https://www.cherylogers.com/>.

Dodie Rogers can be found on Facebook. She is currently working on writing her memoirs, telling the story about her life with her famous family.



Dodie Rogers with her husband Jon Patterson.

Emerging Aviation Technology Conference

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation hosted its third Emerging Aviation Technology Conference on Tuesday, April 5, 2022. According to James Grimsley, the conference served to provide an overview of what the Choctaw Nation is doing in the field of emerging aviation technology, offer a networking opportunity with essential industry stakeholders and continue to seek public comment and input on emerging aviation technology initiatives, including advanced drone operations. “Drones and things like AAM have potential,” Grimsley said. “We can pull some of the activities on the roadways off and begin to do it a little more efficiently and more kind of innovative ways.”

The Choctaw Nation is working with the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) and other industry leaders to create the regulations that will be required for this unmanned aerial infrastructure. “Being a tribe and actually helping craft the rules is very historic,” Grimsley said. “We are actually impacting

and helping create the regulations, the new rules that will help us safely do this.”

Many companies like Spright, based in Denver, Colorado, focus on using drones for deliveries. “We are a big aviation company, so drones is kind of the next phase of what we are doing,” said Spright executive Justin Steinke in an interview with KTEN News. “We currently do medical helicopters all over the U.S., so we will continue really all over the world.”

Grimsley commented that many significant milestones have been achieved over the past three years.

“Our last emerging aviation technology conference was in 2019, prior to the global pandemic,” he said. “The Choctaw Nation has built an international ‘brand’ and reputation in the emerging aviation technology industries and that reputation is helping to build new industry and academic relationships with the Choctaw Nation. This is bolstering our STEM education and other activities and opening up new opportunities for our Reservation communities.”



Left: James Grimsley, Executive Director of Advanced Technology at the Choctaw Nation, makes the opening remarks during the Emerging Aviation Technology Conference.



Right: Chief Gary Batton addresses the crowd during the Emerging Aviation Technology Conference on April 4. Below: Jay Merkle, Executive Director of the Federal Aviation Administration’s Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Office, discusses aviation technology with James Grimsley



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Hit the open road and plan your next road trip in Choctaw Country

Part 2

By Christian Toews

In the first article of this series, we began our road trip around Choctaw Country. We visited Hugo, Idabel and Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

Since the last article, the trees have started to bloom, and everything has become greener with life.

The classic Oklahoma storms have also begun to arrive. But as the old saying goes, April's showers bring May's flowers. So, pack up the car and take a road trip through Choctaw Country to watch spring bloom across the southeastern part of Oklahoma.

We will begin the second part of our road trip in Honobia, Oklahoma.

From Broken Bow, where we stopped in the last article, head north to find the small community of Honobia.

While it might be a small town, it has a considerable reputation.

It is one of the hottest spots in the United States for Bigfoot sightings and tales.

Every year, Honobia hosts an annual Bigfoot festival.



Photo by Christian Toews

Honobia, Oklahoma, is home to the Bigfoot Festival and crystal clear skies perfect for stargazing.

Vendors, believers and even television shows gather at the festival to share new information, swap stories and celebrate this legendary creature.

According to honobiabigfoot.com, the 2022 bigfoot festival will take place on September 30 and October 1, 2022.

Shawna Cline owns the Honobia Creek Store & RV Park. She said over 5,000 people make their way to the area for the annual festival.

Cline has owned and operated the Honobia Creek Store with her husband, Chris, for 15 years.

"I didn't realize how many bigfoot believers there were. People come from all over the country and all around the world," she said.

While the festival in the fall draws large crowds to Honobia, there are plenty of other reasons to visit. Oklahoma's Little River runs through this area and is excellent for kayaking.

There are many trails to ride side-by-sides and ATVs. Rent a cabin, tent camp or bring your RV and enjoy the beautiful scenery in the great outdoors.

Another popular activity in this area is stargazing.

According to Cline, many people visit and stay to look at the stars. "There have been several people who have camped or brought their RV and took photos of the stars because you can see them so well," she said. "We stop and look at the stars all the time. I didn't realize how many people don't get to do that."

The Honobia Creek Store also offers a restaurant and a wide selection of merchandise.

One person left a review on Google saying:

"After three years, I had this burger again and it was as amazing as I remember. We stopped there yesterday and the staff is so friendly. The food is amazing."

If you are looking for a unique outdoor experience, look no further than Honobia on your road trip.

For more information on Honobia Creek Store, check out the Store's Facebook page.

Our next destination is beautiful Poteau, Oklahoma.

The drive from Honobia to Poteau is breathtaking. You will travel past some



Choctaw Nation photo

Spring is the perfect time to plan a road trip through Choctaw Country. Pocola Casino & Resort offers everything you need to make a road trip stop or a weekend getaway an unforgettable experience.

of the best scenic views in Oklahoma on your way.

Once you arrive, the options for activities and things to see are almost endless.

Grab a cuppa Joe at the Coffee Cup downtown, then head to Runestone park in nearby Heavener, which has an artifact from some of the area's earliest settlers. You can also check out Cavanal Hill, which is known as the "world's highest hill" because it is barely shy of being classified as a mountain.

If you want to learn even more about the area's history, you can visit the LeFlore County Museum at Hotel Lowry.

One of the most popular attractions in this area is the Poteau Balloon Fest.

You will be dazzled as the sky is filled with hot air balloons. Stay until the sun goes down, and you will see a truly unique hot air balloon experience where the balloon glows light up the sky. Poteau is a genuinely unique stop along our road trip through Choctaw Country.

To find out more about activities and attractions, you can visit www.poteau-ok.com or www.choctawcountry.com.

The final stop on this leg of our road

trip is a short drive from Poteau to the town of Pocola, Oklahoma.

This is the perfect location to stop for the night or enjoy some world-class cuisine. Pocola is home to one of the three Choctaw Casino & Resort locations.

This resort is for those searching for a unique experience, where you can enjoy tacos and burgers or steak and shrimp. Enjoy entertainers and try your luck at the tables, this resort offers everything you need to make a road trip stop or a weekend getaway an unforgettable experience.

If you feel adventurous during your stay, you can step right outside Choctaw Country and visit Fort Smith, Arkansas, where there are even more entertainment and attraction options.

Pocola is the perfect place to stop along our road trip if you are looking for a luxury experience for any budget or interest.

To find out more about the Choctaw Casino & Resort in Pocola, you can visit www.choctawcasinos.com.

Be sure to join us again next month for the final portion of our road trip through Choctaw Country.

Kick Up Your Heels Walk

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Every year, the community of Durant gathers to "stomp out sexual assault" during the Kick Up Your Heels Walk.

The event encourages men to put themselves in a woman's shoes to show support for victims of sexual violence. This year, the Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention Program hosted the event at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters Amphitheater on April 9. Tribal and community members, Choctaw Nation associates, police officers from surrounding communities and members of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol all gathered to show support for the cause.

Men are invited to don high heels for this annual walk, which aims to support victims and educate men about the sexual violence women in America face every day. The theme this year was "The Power of Support."

According to the Department of Justice, every 68 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted. The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation also stated that in 2020, Oklahoma law enforcement agencies, including tribal law enforcement, reported 2,245 forcible and attempted rapes.

"The Choctaw Nation supports its community partners and takes a strong stance against domestic and sexual violence," said Anna Marcy, Program Manager, Family Violence Prevention. "We want participants to come out and show these victims we are willing to walk in their shoes, so these victims don't feel isolated."

The Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention Programs supports victims of family violence by providing crisis intervention services, advocacy, legal advocacy, counseling and emergency housing in some cases. In addition, victims receiving services through the program can receive in-home education and advocacy to address and stop intergenerational violence, according to Marcy. The program can provide services to any victim of domestic violence within the CNO reservation regardless of whether the victim is affiliated with a tribe.

On March 10, 2022, Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and expanded tribal jurisdiction to include non-Indian persons who commit crimes related to child violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking, stalking, obstruction of justice, and assaults on tribal justice personnel. This Congressional expansion of tribal jurisdiction allows tribes to prosecute in their Courts non-Indian persons who victimize tribal members.

Anyone residing within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma who has been a victim of family violence can contact Choctaw Nation Children and Family Services at (800) 522-6170 for information and assistance. For those residing off CNO's tribal lands, the State of Oklahoma has established the Oklahoma SafeLine, a confidential, toll-free, 24-hour hotline for Oklahomans seeking help or information about domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault. To reach SafeLine, call (800) 522-SAFE (7233).



Photos by Kendra Germany-Wall

Above: The group poses for a photo after the Kick Up Your Heels Walk on April 9.

Right: An Oklahoma Highway Trooper carries his red high heels after participating in the walk.

Below: Participants in the walk carry signs with messages advocating for consent and demanding change. Bottom Right: Cousins Hazel Germany and Leah Carroll pose for a photo after the walk.



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Chief Batton's Easter Celebration



Photo by Chris Jennings
Jace Davis and Kailin Bare practice stickball together before their tournament during Chief Batton's Annual Easter Celebration.



Photo by Chris Jennings
Bessie Allensworth reaches for an egg during the elder egg hunt.



Photo by Chris Jennings
Brooklyn Welch eats her fried chicken lunch before going on an egg hunt.



Photo by Chris Jennings
As crowds line up for the egg hunts during Chief Batton's Annual Easter Celebration, things get a little silly.



Photo by Chris Jennings
Easter isn't just for the kids. Elders are excited to take part in an Easter egg hunt, too.



Photo by Chris Jennings



Photo by Christian Toews

Easter egg hunts are serious business in Tvshka Homma. Parents make a mad dash to get eggs for their little ones.

Children fill their baskets, buckets and bags full of eggs during the annual egg hunt.



Photo by Christian Toews

Based out of Bethany, Oklahoma, Interstate Helicopters drop eggs from the sky. After having to cancel the past few years, the Choctaw Nation went above and beyond to make this year's celebration special.



Photo by Christian Toews

Elders participate in the elder Easter egg hunt while enjoying the nice weather and beautiful capitol grounds during Chief Batton's Annual Easter Celebration.



Photo by Christian Toews

Children scramble to get the most eggs during Chief Batton's Annual Easter Celebration.

CHOCTAW NATION DISTRICT PRINCESS PAGEANTS



THURSDAY, APRIL 14 - 6 P.M.
District 1 – Choctaw Community Center, Idabel
District 2 – Choctaw Community Center, Broken Bow

THURSDAY, APRIL 21 - 6 P.M.
District 3 – Choctaw Community Center, Tali hina
District 6 – Choctaw Community Center, Wilburton

THURSDAY, MAY 12 - 6 P.M.
District 4 – Choctaw Community Center, Poteau
District 5 – Choctaw Community Center, Stigler

THURSDAY, MAY 19 - 6 P.M.
District 7 – Choctaw Community Center, Antlers
District 8 – Choctaw Community Center, Hugo

THURSDAY, MAY 26 - 6 P.M.
District 9 – Cultural Center, Durant
District 10 – Choctaw Community Center, Atoka

THURSDAY, JUNE 2 - 6 P.M.
District 11 – Choctaw Community Center, McAlester
District 12 – Choctaw Community Center, Coalgate

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Choctaw Nation Cultural Services



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Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium Announces Tribes' Impact on Oklahoma's Economy

Tribes' economic impact exceeds \$15.6 billion in 2019

OKLAHOMA CITY, March 23, 2022—Native American tribes in Oklahoma had a \$15.6 billion impact on the state in 2019, according to a new study released Wednesday.

The study found that the tribes directly employ more than 54,000 people and support a total of 113,442 jobs to tribal citizens and non-citizens, accounting for more than \$5.4 billion in wages and benefits to Oklahoma workers in 2019.

"This study shows just how important tribes are to Oklahoma's economy," said Neal McCaleb, Chickasaw Nation Ambassador to the United States. "We are helping create sustainable economies through our many valuable jobs as well as making other substantial and impactful investments into our broader communities," said McCaleb "This is our home and we look forward to continued growth — growth that benefits all Oklahomans."

This study, sponsored through the Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium, was released during a press conference at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City on Wednesday. In 2019, the Consortium sponsored a similar study. The new report shows a significant increase of more than \$2.6 billion in economic activity from FY 2017 to FY 2019.

"Tribes are an economic driver as well as a constant and reliable partner," said Victor Flores, President, Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium and Director of Tribal Services, REDW, LLC. "Unlike corporations that move based on economic conditions, our tribes are here to stay," said Flores. "Oklahoma is home, and we will continue to reinvest in our communities through job creation, critical service delivery and infrastructure development. Oklahoma is stronger when we all work together."

One of the most impactful contributions by the 38 federally recognized tribes has been in health care, particularly in rural and underserved Oklahoma communities. Tribal health care operates more than 45 facilities, providing care in most locations to both Native American and non-Native Oklahomans.

When health care is provided to Native Americans at tribal health facilities, the entire cost of care is paid by the federal government, resulting in savings to the state. In 2019, tribes paid \$232 million in Medicaid expenditures, saving the state \$86 million by requiring no state matching funds.

"Tribally owned and federal health

centers across the state provide life-saving treatment and improved quality of life to Native and non-Native citizens," said Nicolas Barton, Executive Director, Southern Plains Tribal Health Board. "In 2019 alone, there were 3.5 million patient visits at tribal health facilities in Oklahoma," said Barton. "By maintaining the health care safety net in rural areas, tribes are strengthening Oklahoma's entire health care infrastructure and ensuring many healthy generations to come."

Through gaming compacts between Oklahoma-based tribes and the state, tribal nations submit a percentage of their Class III gaming revenues for the exclusive right to operate casinos in the state. Oklahoma sends the first \$250,000 of these fees to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Of the remaining funds, 88 percent is earmarked for public education supporting all Oklahomans.

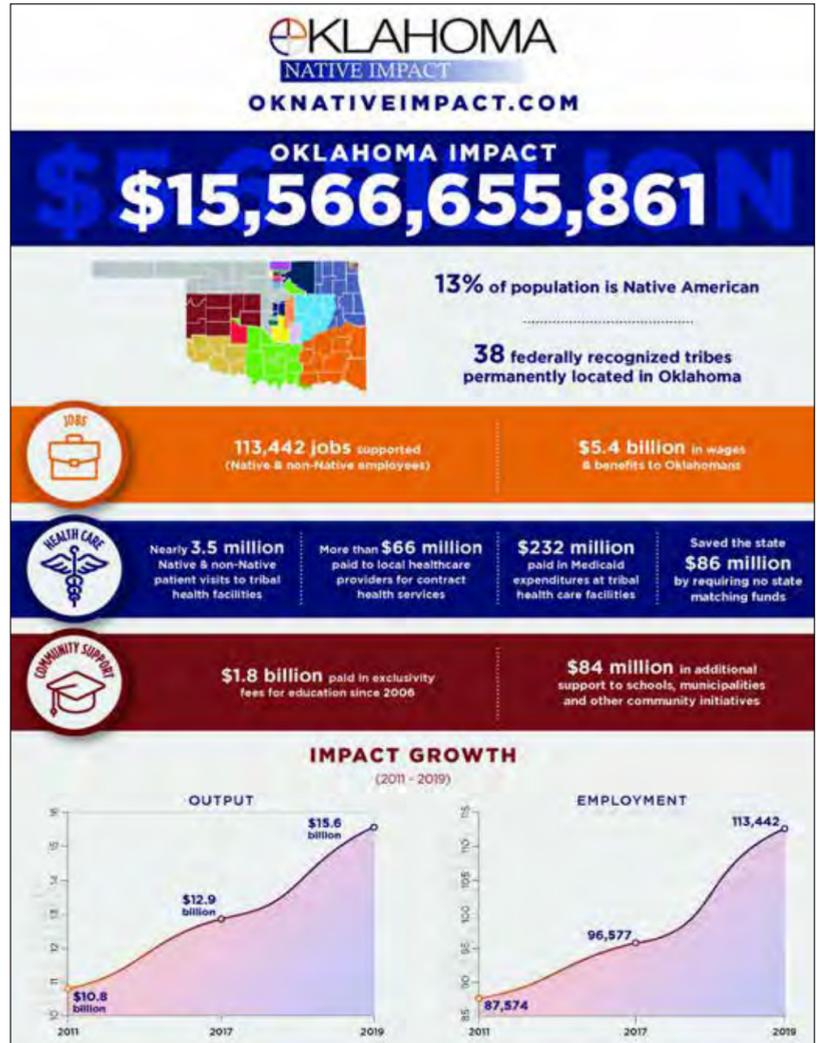
The tribes have invested heavily to support local communities and efforts. Oklahoma tribes have paid more than \$1.8 billion in exclusivity fees since 2006. More than \$1.5 billion has been earmarked for public education. In 2019, an additional \$84 million was paid to support Oklahoma schools, municipalities and other community initiatives.

"It is impossible to overstate the positive impact Oklahoma's tribal nations have had, and continue to have, on our state," said Matthew L. Morgan, Chairman, Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association. "Through our gaming industry, we employ more than 75,000 people, mostly in rural communities. We build roads and hospitals, invest in our public schools and universities and create programs to serve those who need assistance," said Morgan. "We are proud of our past, excited about things happening right now, and determined to leave the next generation an industry, and an Oklahoma, that they can take pride in."

Kyle Dean, associate professor of economics and the director for the Center for Native American and Urban Studies at Oklahoma City University, analyzed data from 16 tribal Nations based in Oklahoma and prepared the study.

The Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium's mission is to advance tribal economics and strengthen tribal finance within the state of Oklahoma.

More information can be found at ok-nativeimpact.com.



Choctaw Nation Photo

On March 23, the Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium announced the impact Native American tribes have on Oklahoma's economy.

Choctaw Cultural Center Easter Eggstravaganza



Photos by Rylee Tollett



Above: Kids line up for the very first Easter Eggstravaganza. Top Left: The Easter Bunny stands ready to mark the start of the egg hunt.



Bottom Left: Children and parents take part in arts and crafts during the Eggstravaganza.



Bottom: little ones get a chance to hunt eggs before the big kids get their turn.

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May 2022

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April 1 marked the first anniversary of the Sizemore decision, which applied the US Supreme Court's McGirt Ruling to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



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The Choctaw Nation is currently looking for all foster home types. They accept single individuals, married couples and domestic partnerships as foster parents.



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Check out some highlights from Chief Batton's Annual Easter Celebration.

Biskinik Mission Statement:
To serve as the source of information for Choctaw Nation tribal members by delivering community news through a variety of communication channels.

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